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Far Eastern Tour: The Experiences of the Canadian Infantry
in Korea, 1950-53

by

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ABSTRACT

Canadian ground troops took an active part in United Nations operations during the Korean War. Although the Army's contribution of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group was small by First and Second World War standards, only the Republic of Korea, the United States and Great Britain fielded larger contingents. The core of the 25th Brigade consisted of three infantry battalions. They contained most of the Brigade's effective manpower, and bore the brunt of the fighting.

Despite the infantry's pre-eminent role in Korea, their experiences up to now remain forgotten. This thesis examines the ordeal of Canadian combat soldiers in the Far East and shows how they suffered horrendous, often unnecessary, hardships at the hands of an indifferent high command.

From the outset, Canadian infantrymen were neither properly trained nor equipped for the combat conditions they encountered. Battlefield performance and combat motivation suffered accordingly. The infantry's problems extended into other areas. Insufficient indoctrination left soldiers poorly prepared for the non-combat aspects of service in the Far East, leading some to question the purpose of Canadian involvement in Korea. Medical preparations were also

inadequate, making soldiers susceptible to a variety of infectious diseases. In the combat zone, little regard was shown for soldiers' welfare. Infantrymen lived like beggars without even the most basic comforts and amenities, relying on alcohol to assuage the discomforts of life in the field. Clearly, the Canadian infantry was plagued by problems in Korea. These problems shaped the experiences of Canadian combat soldiers, making their Far Eastern tours far more difficult and dangerous than they need have been.

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INTRODUCTION

SOLDIERS AND WAR

Nearly five decades after the signing of the cease-fire agreement at Pamunjom, the experiences of Canadian soldiers in the Korean War remain forgotten. Although there are numerous popular accounts of the Canadian Army in Korea, we still know little about the realities and practical details of the infantry's wartime experiences. This is a serious gap in Canadian military history. An in-depth study of soldiers' experiences expands our understanding of the conflict, and furnishes the Canadian military with an institutional memory of its first major United Nations operation. As recent events have shown, the military ignores history at its peril. Somalia was not the first time the Canadians ran into difficulties in an unfamiliar operational environment. Many of the problems experienced by the Airborne Regiment were encountered by the soldiers of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade four decades earlier. A study of these problems fills the void in the historiography, and provides the military with the analytical perspective needed to understand its own recent history.

The Korean War remains the largest Canadian military operation of the post-1945 era. Although small by First and

Second World War standards, the Army's contribution of the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group was by no means insignificant. Only the South Koreans, the Americans, and the British fielded larger contingents. The combat strength of the 25th Brigade lay in its three infantry battalions, drawn from the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and the Royal 22e Regiment. Together, these units accounted for approximately two-thirds of the 25th Brigade's total manpower.

The terrain and limited nature of combat operations in Korea resulted in the infantry doing almost all of the fighting. Tanks were important early in the war, but by the time the Canadians arrived they were primarily used as mobile artillery platforms. The static phase of the fighting also saw the artillery and engineers restricted to combat support missions. Rarely did soldiers from these arms engage the enemy in close combat. To speak of the 25th Brigade in the context of the Korean War, then, is to speak of the soldiers in the three infantry battalions. Korea was clearly the infantry's war, and a study of their experiences captures the essence of the larger Canadian involvement.

From an academic viewpoint, the Korean War in general, and the experiences of the Canadian infantry in particular, remain uncharted territory. Aside from a few articles in *Canadian Defence Quarterly* and *Canadian Military History*, and an indifferent Official History, scholars have been slow

to recognize its importance. Popular historians, on the other hand, have been busy, churning out several accounts in the past two decades. Notable examples included John Melandy's *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War* (1983), the chapters on Korea in J.L. Granatstein's and David Bercuson's *War and Peacekeeping* (1991),¹ and in John Marteinson's *We Stand On Guard* (1992), and most recently, Ted Barris' *Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War, 1950-53* (1999).² All were well-written but generally lacked analysis and detail.³ They also tended to concentrate on battles, excluding almost everything else.⁴

Several oral collections were also published. The best were John Gardham's *Korea Volunteer* (1994), and Robert Hepenstall's *Find the Dragon* (1995).⁵ With the possible

¹Although Granatstein and Bercuson are academic historians, the work was definitely geared towards a popular readership.

²See John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1983); David Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein, *War and Peacekeeping: From South Africa to the Gulf - Canada's Limited Wars* (Toronto: Key porter, 1991); William Johnston and Stephen J. Harris, "The Post-war Army and the War in Korea," *We Stand On Guard: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Army* (Montreal: Ovale, 1992); and, Ted Barris, *Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War, 1950-53* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1999).

³Even worse are some of the popular Commonwealth histories of the Korean War, such as Tim Carew's, *The Korean War: The Story of the Fighting Commonwealth Regiments, 1950-1953* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1967).

⁴This was also true of C.N. Barclay's *The First Commonwealth Division: The Story of the British Commonwealth Land Forces in Korea, 1950-1953* (London: Gale and Polden, 1954).

exception of *Find the Dragon*, these works were completely devoid of critical analysis. Nevertheless, the testimonies of Korean veterans were revealing, and provided a useful adjunct to the archival sources.

The net result of the popular historians' stranglehold on the historiography of Canada and the Korean War is twofold. First, their desire to portray the Canadians in a heroic light prevented them from scrutinizing their combat record. As will be seen, the Canadian infantry did not perform particularly well in Korea. Far from being masters of the battlefield, the Canadians were routinely out-fought by a highly capable Chinese enemy, particularly during the last 18 months of the war.

To understand why this was the case, it is necessary to look beyond the familiar confines of the battlefield to issues such as training, equipment, indoctrination, and the unique hardships encountered in the Far Eastern theatre of operations. A sound appreciation of these issues is essential to understanding battlefield performance, and indeed the broader Canadian experience, in Korea. The popular historians ignored the non-combat aspects of Canada's involvement with one important exception: the recruitment of the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF). The

⁵John Gardam, *Korea Volunteer: An Oral History From Those Who Were There* (Burnstown: General Store Publishing, 1994); Robert Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon: The Canadian Army in Korea, 1950-1953* (Edmonton: Four Winds Publishing, 1995).

CASF was Canada's initial contribution to the fighting in Korea, and the peculiar circumstances surrounding its recruitment have been blown into mythic proportions by the popular historians. As will be seen, however, popular portrayals of the CASF are tenuous at best.

In view of these serious historiographical shortcomings, it is obvious that a comprehensive examination of the Canadian infantry in Korea is considerably overdue. But how does the historian approach such a study? The answer to this question is as complex as it is varied. Fortunately, a sizeable literature has been assembled over the past eight decades that places soldiers at the centre of analysis. Using the themes developed in these studies as categories of analysis, the historian can assemble a comprehensive study of soldiers in a specific historical context. Indeed, the most recent trend in the historiography is to do just that. What, then, are some of the most important themes and works to emerge from the study of soldiers and war?

The first studies of soldiers written in the English language appeared shortly after the First World War. The authors of these early works were largely serving or retired military officers, and their focus was soldiers in battle. Combining extensive primary research, usually in the form of questionnaires or after action interviews, with their own

military experiences, these analysts sought to delineate general theories about battlefield behavior.⁶

Without a doubt, the pioneering work of the genre was Ardant du Picq's little known *Etudes sur le Combat* (1880), published in English in 1921 under the title *Battle Studies*.⁷ Du Picq, a French Army officer, was adamant that the fighting man was the *sine qua non* of battle. He wrote:

Nothing can wisely be prescribed in an army -- its personnel, organization, discipline, tactics, things which are connected like fingers of a hand -- without exact knowledge of the fundamental instrument, man, and his state of mind, his morale, at the instant of combat... Let us then study man in battle, for it is he who really fights it.⁸

Du Picq argued that human nature was fundamentally immutable. Thus, by combining a prodigious reading of military history with his own empirical research, he believed it was possible to illuminate universal truths about battlefield behaviour.⁹ Unfortunately, du Picq's work was spurned by his contemporaries, and he was killed at the Battle of Metz in 1870 -- a decade before his ground

⁶I use the term "analysts" deliberately to differentiate this first generation of battlefield commentators from professionally trained social scientists and historians.

⁷Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern*, translated by Colonel John Greely and Major Robert C. Cotton (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921).

⁸*Ibid.*, 39, 41.

⁹Du Picq's empirical research assumed the form of a circular questionnaire.

breaking research was published in France, and half a century before it appeared in North America.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, analysts began to expand their studies of battlefield behavior to include stress. Drawing on his experiences as a regimental medical officer during the First World War, Lord Moran wrote *The Anatomy of Courage* (1945).¹⁰ Moran argued that courage was the "master quality" of combat soldiers, as it inspired them "to hold their ground when every instinct calls upon them to run away."¹¹ Courage, alas, was fleeting; Moran compared it to a bank account. According to this analogy, soldiers entered battle with a finite amount of courage capital. During combat, soldiers were continually spending it. If they were unable to add to their courage capital, they would eventually go bankrupt.¹² When this happened, they were "finished" as soldiers.¹³

If the United States can be said to have had the equivalent of an Ardent du Picq or a Lord Moran, it would have to be S.L.A. Marshall. During the Second World War,

¹⁰The work was not published in the United States until 1967.

¹¹Lord Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), viii.

¹²According to Moran, victory added to a soldier's courage capital.

¹³Ibid., 63-64. See Major-General Frank Richardson's monograph *Fighting Spirit* (London: Ovale, 1978), for another study of battlefield stress by an Army medical officer.

Marshall, a veteran infantry officer, served with the United States Army Historical Division as an operations analyst. His research involved establishing the fire ratio of American combat units. To this end, he interviewed approximately 400 frontline infantry companies (roughly 50,000 men) in both the Pacific and European theatres.¹⁴ In 1947, Marshall published his findings in his seminal monograph *Men Against Fire*. Though the reliability of Marshall's methodology has been questioned, recent scholarship generally supports his more salient findings.¹⁵ Thus, *Men Against Fire* remains "a classic account of the infantryman's behaviour on the battlefield."¹⁶

Arguably the most significant insight to be gained from Marshall's work was that up to 75 percent of riflemen "will not fire or will not persist in firing against the enemy."¹⁷ This led him to conclude that during the heat of combat,

¹⁴Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare, 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1980), p. 214.

¹⁵See Ibid.

¹⁶Richard Holmes, *Firing Line* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), 13.

¹⁷S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1947), 50. As an Operations Analyst with the 8th (US) Army, Marshall also produced a number of studies on infantry combat in the Korean War. The most important of these was *The River and the Gauntlet: The Defeat of the Eighth Army by the Chinese Communist Forces, November 1950, In the Battle of the Chongchon River* (New York: William Morrow, 1953).

soldiers do not consider themselves to be cogs in a "great machine."¹⁸ On the contrary, he argued that they view themselves as equals within a small group. Usually, the members of the group look to a "naturally strong character" for leadership, even though one of them may hold a non-commissioned rank.¹⁹ However, Marshall denied that leadership was the determining factor in combat motivation. Instead, he attributed the will to fight to group survival, and to the individual soldier's fear of invoking the wrath of his comrades through cowardly behaviour. Unlike du Picq, Marshall lived to see his research reach fruition: during the 1950s the United States Army incorporated his recommendations for increasing the infantry's fire ratio into a tactical system known as *Train Fire*.²⁰

A useful adjunct to Marshall's work is Samuel Stouffer's two volume tome *The American Soldier: Studies in Social Psychology in World War II* (1949).²¹ The first volume, *Adjustment During Army Life*, examined themes such as social mobility in the Army, posting satisfaction, and attitudes toward leadership. The second volume, *Combat and*

¹⁸Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 114.

¹⁹John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Penguin, 1976), 51.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 10.

²¹Samuel A. Stouffer, *The American Soldier*, vol. I, *Adjustment During Army Life*, vol. II, *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949).

Its Aftermath, explored issues such as the GI's pre-conceptions of battle, combat motivation, and the soldier's return to civilian life. Though the work remains an invaluable source for students of the Second World War American Army, it lacked a wider theoretical relevance.

The same cannot be said for Brigadier Shelford Bidwell's *Modern Warfare: A Study of Men, Weapons and Theories* (1973). Like Moran, Bidwell was concerned with the behaviour of soldiers under extreme stress.²² More significantly, Bidwell tried to answer the question of what actually happens during combat. In the end, his efforts met with mixed results, and his analysis, while theoretically sound, lacked a firm grounding in historical evidence. Perhaps this caveat is unduly harsh; in the introduction he cautioned that "the union between soldier and scientist has not yet passed beyond the stage of flirtation."²³ Nevertheless, *Modern Warfare* remains an immensely important monograph.

The uneasy relationship between social scientists and historians was certainly on John Keegan's mind when he wrote his magnum opus, *The Face of Battle* (1976). Through a

²²For another view on battlefield stress, Peter Watson, *War On the Mind: The Military Uses and Abuses of Psychology* (London: Hutchinson, 1978). Watson argued that the stresses encountered on the field of battle have virtually nothing in common with those encountered in civilian life.

²³Shelford Bidwell, *Modern Warfare: A Study of Men, Weapons and Theories* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), 11.

diversion of historical effort from the rear to the front of the battlefield, Keegan unmasked the true "face of battle" -- battle as it was experienced by the soldier at the "point of maximum danger." As *The Face of Battle* was the genesis for what has come to be known as the "new" military history, it is instructive to discuss the work in some detail.

Keegan's motives for writing *The Face of Battle* were threefold. First, as a professionally trained historian he wanted to regain for military history some of its lost academic respectability.²⁴ He hoped to achieve this by tackling the "battle piece" from a decidedly different angle of analysis. By doing so, Keegan believed he could release the subject from the stylistic straitjacket into which it had been placed by the popular historians.²⁵

Second, Keegan wanted to reclaim the study of battle from the social scientists.²⁶ Though he conceded that battle was "necessarily a social and psychological study," he suggested that the subject was best left to historians.

²⁴Keegan never served in the military.

²⁵Prior to the appearance of *The Face of Battle* there were two fundamental approaches to the writing of battle history: the "drums and trumpets" approach of the popular historians, and the "outcome" approach of the operational historians. Both approaches ignored the battlefield experiences of soldiers.

²⁶During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a profusion of articles and monographs written by social scientists that examined the soldier in battle.

He wrote:

[Battle] is not a study only for the sociologist or the psychologist, and indeed ought not perhaps to be properly a study for either. For the human group in battle, and the quality and source of the stress it undergoes, are drained of life and meaning by the laboratory approach which social scientists practice... Battle is a historical subject whose nature and trend of development can only be understood down a long historical perspective.²⁷

Third, and most importantly, as Senior Lecturer at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, Keegan was responsible for teaching young men who were to be subalterns in the British Army. Since cadets are trained to lead men in battle, "their teaching is a very serious business, and should certainly have as profound and unqualified a regard for truth as any teaching whatsoever."²⁸ Keegan, however, found the teaching of battle circumscribed by the traditional, top-heavy approaches to the subject. Thus, Keegan's primary motive in writing *The Face of Battle* was to provide his cadets with an historical glimpse of battle at the level of encounter.

Keegan's approach consisted of case-studies of three different battles: Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme. After placing each battle in a strategic and tactical context, he discussed the different categories of combat that characterized each action. This was followed by an

²⁷Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 303.

²⁸Frederick Pottle, "The Teaching of Battle," *The Yale Review* (March 1977), 424.

examination of issues such as the plight of the wounded, combat motivation, the physical circumstances of the battle, and a brief epilogue. By incorporating these themes into his narrative, Keegan successfully eschewed the shortcomings of the traditional approaches to battle history. Moreover, he was able to convey to the reader a sense of what it was like to have participated and, for some, to have been wounded, in the three battles he examined.

Because Keegan approached battle from "the sharp end," he made extensive use of the analysts' studies on battlefield behavior and stress. He also made judicious use of a number of medical histories, including W.F. Stevenson's *Wounds in War* and W.G. Macpherson's *History of the Great War: Medical Services*. This was the truly revolutionary aspect of Keegan's approach. For before he wrote *The Face of Battle*, borrowing from the battlefield analysts or medical historians was regarded as pure anathema by military historians.

Predictably, *The Face of Battle* quickly became a catalyst for other, predominantly British, military historians. In 1978, Denis Winter published *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (1978).²⁹ This often overlooked work covered topics as diverse as training, trench life, and the weapons of trench warfare, in a successful attempt to

²⁹Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin, 1978).

document the experiences of British soldiers on the Western Front.

British historian John Ellis used a similar approach in his study of Allied fighting men in the Second World War, *The Sharp End of War* (1980). Although the work purported to cover the experiences of all Allied soldiers, including the Canadians, it was primarily concerned with those of the British and Americans. Nevertheless, *The Sharp End of War* contained some excellent sections on life in the field, casualties, attitudes towards the enemy, and the plight of combat replacements.³⁰

That same year British scholar Tony Ashworth published his exceptional monograph, *Trench Warfare, 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System*. Like Keegan, Ashworth was concerned with "the direct experiences of soldiers in battle."³¹ Ashworth's focus, however, was the reluctance of soldiers to engage the enemy, rather than their willingness to do so. Moreover, unlike Keegan, Ashworth made overt, and effective, use of sociological and social psychological theory. Thus, *Trench Warfare* was the first battlefield history to successfully meld historical methodology with social scientific theory.

Ashworth argued that tacit truces were the norm amongst

³⁰John Ellis, *The Sharp End of War* (London: David and Charles, 1980). His *On Infantry* (New York: Praeger, 1984) was also quite good.

³¹Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 226.

frontline combatants during the First World War. Obviously, these truces, or "unrestricted exchanges of peace" as he called them, contravened official operational doctrine. Thus, Ashworth debunked the myth that trench fighters were passive objects in a war fought by General Staffs several miles behind the firing line. Indeed, he argued that frontline combatants actively sought to control the "conditions of their existence."³²

Although British scholars were quick to adopt Keegan's approach, historians on the other side of the Atlantic were not, as evidenced by the decidedly indifferent reviews *The Face of Battle* received in some North American military history journals. The apparent reluctance of his peers to embrace the "new" military history led Richard Kohn to write his provocative essay, "The Social History of the American Soldier" (1980). Kohn lambasted American historians for their methodological conservatism, and encouraged them to "take a fresh look at the soldier."³³ Significantly, Kohn

³²Ibid., 23. A useful adjunct to Ashworth's *Trench Warfare* is Alan Clark's *The Donkeys* (London: Hutchinson & CO., 1961). The work offered a scathing indictment of the British High Command's tactical ineptitude and callous disregard for the life of the common soldier. Although *The Donkeys* was not a dedicated study of soldiers' experiences, the work did devote considerable space to a discussion of the misery and privations endured by the British Expeditionary Force.

³³ Richard H. Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research," *American Historical Review*, Volume LXXXVI, No. 3, (June 1981), 553-567.

also encouraged them to broaden their categories of analysis to include subjects not related to combat, such as peacetime service, the interaction of soldiers and civilians, and the social structure of the selective service program.

One of the first scholars to answer Kohn's call for thematic diversity was Canadian military historian Peter Burroughs. His insightful essay, "Tackling Army Desertion in British North America" (1980), explored the reasons behind the British Army's high rates of desertion in the New World, and examined issues such as garrison routine, discipline, alcohol abuse, and pensions.³⁴ Conspicuously absent from Burrough's narrative was any discussion of battle. His essay, therefore, symbolized the beginnings of an historiographical retreat from the battlefield, an approach that more "new" military historians emulated as the decade progressed.

One of Burroughs' more important observations was that officers in the British Army often used "volunteering for special corps or special services [read garrison duty]... to rid their battalions of drunkards, troublemakers, and

³⁴A useful adjunct to Burroughs' essay is David Zimmerman's chapter entitled "The Middle Years, 1818-1860," in his monograph *Coastal Fort: A History of Fort Sullivan Eastport, Maine* (Eastport: Border Historical Society, 1984). Zimmerman tackled many of the same issues as Burroughs, and argued that the changing "structure and function" of the garrison at Fort Sullivan reflected, in microcosm, "the evolution of the entire American Army." See *Ibid.*, 67.

incompetents."³⁵ Burroughs also found that "older soldiers with long-service records" were more amenable to the vexations and monotony of peacetime garrison routine.³⁶ However, as John Keegan demonstrated, "old" soldiers are the least able to withstand the rigours of field service.³⁷ Paradoxically, then, the soldiers most suited to peacetime service were the ones least able to endure the hardships of war.

In 1981, Paddy Griffith returned to the "sharp end" in his monograph *Forward Into Battle*. For some inexplicable reason the work has been almost completely ignored. This is a shame, as *Forward Into Battle* may be regarded as the corollary to Keegan's *The Face of Battle*.

Griffith's focus and approach was much the same as Keegan's, although like Winter and Ellis, he transcended his pre-occupation with specific battles. Instead, Griffith organized his study around allegedly pivotal periods in the tactical evolution of modern Western armies: hence, his first chapter dealt with "The Alleged Firepower of Wellington's Infantry, 1808-1815," and his last, "The Alleged Supremacy of Technology in Vietnam, 1965-1973." Within each of these tactical contexts, Griffith explained

³⁵Peter Burroughs, "Tackling Desertion in British North America," *Canadian Historical Review* (1980), 59.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 57.

³⁷Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 332.

what actually happened when groups of armed and frightened soldiers came face to face in "no-man's land."³⁸ In the end, he saw the soldier as the ultimate determinant in battle. He wrote:

technology has repeatedly failed to prevent close combat as its apostles had hoped. It has failed to relieve the front-line soldier of his heavy burden of personnel risk. If our tactical historians were to recognize this simple fact and ceased to be so bemused by the mythology of mechanical war, we would surely gain a much clearer and more objective view of what really happens on the field of battle.³⁹

Parallelling Griffith's approach but with even more emphasis on the "actualities of war,"⁴⁰ Richard Holmes, also a Senior Lecturer at Sandhurst, wrote *Firing Line* (1985).⁴¹ Holmes echoed Keegan's argument that the traditional approaches to battle history were characterized by "an almost total absence of interest in the behavior or fate of

³⁸Griffith defined "no-man's land" as "the zone between the forward edge of two armies which are locked in combat against each other." See Paddy Griffith, *Forward Into Battle: Fighting Tactics From Waterloo to Vietnam* (Sussex, England: Antony Bird, 1981), 1.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁰Field-Marshal Lord Wavell defined the "actualities of war" as the "effects of tiredness, hunger, fear, lack of sleep, weather..." on the soldier. See Richard Holmes, *Firing Line* (Middlesex: Jonathan Cape, 1985), 7.

⁴¹*Firing Line* was published in the United States under the title *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (New York: The Free Press, 1985). Also see Anthony Kelllett's *Combat Motivation: The Behaviour of Soldiers in Battle* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982).

the common soldier."⁴² *Firing Line*, therefore, was Holmes' own personal "attempt to redress the balance."⁴³

Holmes began his study by asking some fundamental questions about the nature of human behavior in battle, stemming from his own experiences as an infantry officer in the British Territorial Army: "what are the soldier's preconceptions of battle, his sensations on first making contact with the enemy, his changing attitudes towards combat as his experience grows, and his feelings towards his adversary?"⁴⁴ To answer these important questions, Holmes turned to questionnaires and psychological theory, particularly the behavioral concepts of Freud, Jung, and Adler.⁴⁵ The use of psychological theory was the primary difference between Holmes' and Keegan's respective approaches. Holmes even criticized Keegan and Griffith for their reluctance to employ psychological insight. He opined:

there is, alas, still something to quarrel
with even these, the most admirable of their

⁴²Donald Graves, "Naked Truths for the Asking: Twentieth-Century Military Historians and the Battlefield Narrative," *Military History and the Military Profession*, eds., David Charters, Marc Milner, and J. Brent Wilson (London: Praeger, 1992), 46. Shortly after the appearance of *Firing Line*, Richard Holmes and John Keegan joined forces to write *Soldiers: A History of Men in Battle* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986).

⁴³Holmes, *Firing Line*, 7.

⁴⁴Ibid., 15.

⁴⁵Ibid., 22.

school. The understandable tendency of historians to shun excursions to the wilder shore of psychology sometimes leaves the reader with the feeling of having been deprived of a prize that was almost in reach.⁴⁶

The other major difference between Holmes' and Keegan's respective approaches are their analytical frameworks.

While Keegan organized his monograph around three battlefield case-studies, Holmes structured *Firing Line* thematically, with his chapters roughly corresponding to the research questions elucidated above.⁴⁷ He also dedicated a number of sub-chapters to training, sexuality, women in battle, and the return to civilian life. All in all, Holmes was successful in his endeavour, and *Firing Line* has become the touchstone of military historians interested in comprehensive studies of soldiers in war.

Shortly after the appearance of *Firing Line*, John Costello published *Love, Sex, and War* (1985). Drawing on British, American, and German sources, Costello examined the sexual impact of the Second World War on soldiers and civilians alike. Ultimately, he concluded that "the seeds of a profound sexual revolution" were sown during the war.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Ibid., 14.

⁴⁷Holmes' study dealt exclusively with modern warfare.

⁴⁸John Costello, *Love, Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-1945* (London: Collins, 1985), 372. Reginald Roy's *The Journal of Private Fraser* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1985) was published at the same time. Roy confined himself to editing the names and dates in this otherwise original diary of a private soldier in the Canadian Expeditionary Force.

More importantly from a strictly military point of view, was his treatment of homosexuality -- a topic that even Richard Holmes proved unwilling to tackle.

According to Costello, homosexuality was far more common than the official sources would have us believe. Moreover, he convincingly argued that homosexuality, while officially a court martial offence, was often tacitly accepted in the war's more remote theatres.⁴⁹ Finally, Costello devoted a considerable space to venereal disease, a subject that will figure prominently in the pages that follow.⁵⁰

Race and power were the themes of John Dower's *War Without Mercy* (1986). Drawing on a vast range of military and non-military sources, Dower explored the impact of American and Japanese race hate on the execution of the Pacific War.⁵¹ He argued that "stereotyped and often blatantly racist thinking contributed to poor military intelligence and planning, atrocious behaviour, and the

⁴⁹This was especially true in North Africa and the Pacific. See *Ibid.*, 153-174.

⁵⁰A somewhat different interpretation of wartime sexuality can be found in Ruth Roach Pierson's, *'They're Still Women After All': Canadian Womanhood in the Second World War* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986).

⁵¹Dower's sources included: Japanese and American operations reports, popular literature, propaganda films, recruiting posters, newspaper editorials and articles, movies, and cartoons.

adoption of exterminationist policies" in the Pacific War.⁵² Moreover, Dower contended that the discursive frameworks each side employed to characterize the enemy "other," were not unique to the Second World War. In actuality, the racist language and imagery that permeated the conflict was "familiar in practice and formulaic in the ways it was expressed."⁵³ The "malleability" of this language and imagery, Dower maintained, explained "how race hate gave way to an inequitable but harmonious relationship between the victors and vanquished," after the war.⁵⁴ Indeed, he postulated that with the onset of the Cold War in Asia, the racist stereotypes were transferred from the Japanese to the Chinese.⁵⁵ However, *War Without Mercy* stopped short of providing a systematic analysis of racism in the context of Cold War Asia.

In the same year, J.M. Brereton's *The British Soldier: A Social History from 1661 to the Present Day* appeared.⁵⁶ The title notwithstanding, the work was unscholarly and far from comprehensive. Indeed, at less than two-hundred pages in length, Brereton's *The British Soldier* lacked depth and

⁵²John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), X.

⁵³*Ibid.*, xi.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 172-173.

⁵⁶J.M. Brereton, *The British Soldier: A Social History from 1661 to the Present Day* (London: Bodley Head, 1986).

analysis.

For the past three decades quantitative analysis has played a central role in working-class historiography. Jean-Pierre Gagnon's *Le 22e Battalion (Canadian-Francais), 1914-1919* (1986), showed that this methodology could be used effectively by military historians.⁵⁷ One of the most significant findings to emerge out of Gagnon's study of this famous French-Canadian unit was that most of its soldiers had toiled as labourers in Montreal before their induction.⁵⁸ This finding laid to rest the myth purveyed by the war's popular historians that the ranks of the "Vandoos" were filled by hearty French-Canadian frontiersmen.⁵⁹ Moreover, knowing as we do the pitiful condition of Montreal's working-class on the eve of the First World War,⁶⁰ Gagnon's research suggested that the promise of three

⁵⁷Tim Travers used a similar approach in his survey of British officers in the Edwardian Army in *The Killing Grounds: The British Army, The Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare, 1900-1918* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987).

⁵⁸Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22e Battalion (Canadian-Francais), 1914-1919* (Quebec City: Les Presses de l'Universite Laval, 1986), 355.

⁵⁹So intoxicating was the "frontiersmen" myth, that in his popular monograph *Vimy*, Pierre Berton could unequivocally state that "to a very large extent the men who fought at Vimy had worked on farms or lived on the edge of the wilderness." See Pierre Berton, *Vimy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1986), 21.

⁶⁰See Terry Copp, *The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working-Class in Montreal, 1897-1929* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1974).

square meals a day, a free issue of clothing, and a steady pay cheque probably enticed more "Vandoos" to the colours than did any lofty political or nationalistic sentiments.

The writing of the history of the American Civil War has assumed the proportions of a small industry in recent years, but, despite the seemingly endless proliferation of monographs, few authors pay more than lip service to the experiences of frontline combatants. Gerald Linderman attempted to redress this imbalance in his monograph *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (1987). Drawing on the work of Lord Moran, Linderman argued that the volunteers who marched off to war in 1861 conceptualized combat as an "individual endeavour," in which courage reigned supreme.⁶¹ According to this martial *Weltanschauung*, "courage promised the soldier that no matter how immense the war, how distant and fumbling the directing generals, or how powerful the enemy forces seeking his destruction, his fate would continue to rest on his inner qualities."⁶²

In the aftermath of the bloody battles of 1863 and 1864, however, courage alone was not enough to sustain the

⁶¹Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 61. For a somewhat different view of the soldier's Civil War experience, see Thomas Lowry's forthcoming monograph, *The Story the Soldiers Wouldn't Tell: Sex in the Civil War*.

⁶²*Ibid.*

soldier in combat. However, friends and relatives on the homefront continued to view courage as the essential trait of the soldier. According to Linderman, this "divergence of outlooks" ensured that the reality of the Civil War veterans' combat experiences would be lost on subsequent generations of fighting men.⁶³ Consequently, "the values young men carried to war in 1898 were again those of 1861."⁶⁴

Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright also looked beyond the battlefield to measure the full impact of the First World War on Canadian society. In their monograph *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life, 1915-1930* (1987), Morton and Wright argued that the veterans' fight for post-war benefits met largely with failure. However, out of their "struggle to create their own version of civil re-establishment," Morton and Wright maintained, emerged the modern Canadian welfare state.⁶⁵ Thus, the Canadian people were the ultimate beneficiaries of the "second battle."⁶⁶

One of the more recent monographs to utilize the Keegan approach was Robert Edgerton's *Like Lion's They Fought*

⁶³Ibid., 1.

⁶⁴Ibid., 296.

⁶⁵Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life, 1915-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

⁶⁶Ibid., 224-225.

(1988). The work examined the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 "from the bottom-up," and included an exceptional chapter on the experience of war. It also devoted considerable space to a discussion of British and Zulu views of each other. Significantly, Edgerton discovered that "the British were unanimously impressed by the Zulu's 'pluck,' and some British officers explicitly wondered whether British troops would charge as bravely."⁶⁷

Close on the heels of *Like Lions They Fought* was Victor Davis Hanson's *The Western way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (1989). Hanson structured his study of hoplite battle in much the same way as Keegan, albeit with some important variations. Following an introduction to the Greek way of warfare, Hanson considered in turn "The Ordeal of the Hoplite," the hoplite's fighting spirit and morale, phalanx combat at the point of encounter, and concluded with some general reflections on the aftermath of battle and the plight of the wounded.⁶⁸ Unlike Keegan, Hanson situated his subject matter in a larger social and historical context, and maintained that the nature and duration of infantry combat in classical Greece was determined by factors that transcended the immediate tactical concerns of the

⁶⁷Robert B. Edgerton, *Like Lions They Fought: The Zulu War and the Last Black Empire in South Africa* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 171.

⁶⁸Victor Davis Hanson, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

battlefield. The hoplite was, after all, a citizen-soldier. Obviously, "a man whose life is rooted in that of his city, his farm, and his family cannot undertake commitment to an open-ended campaign."⁶⁹ Thus, hoplite battle had to be quick and decisive. Western Civilization's predilection for pitched, decisive infantry battle did not, however, disappear with the Greek phalanx. On the contrary, Hanson argued that "the heritage of Greek hoplite battle" continues to live on -- with potentially tragic results -- in the West.⁷⁰

One of the more important insights to be gleaned from Hanson's work was his analysis of fear upon the ancient battlefield. In addition to the fortifying effects of drink, Hanson viewed the presence of some forty different age groups in the rank and file as helping the untried hoplite to overcome his natural compulsion to writhe in the face of extreme personal danger.⁷¹ Hanson's discovery of the psychology of fear upon the ancient battlefield, therefore, lends credence to the view that human reactions to fear and stress are immutable.

As has been shown, the experiences of Canadian soldiers in the Second World War, like those of their compatriots in Korea, have not yet received systematic treatment from

⁶⁹Ibid., xiii.

⁷⁰Ibid., 227.

⁷¹Ibid., 47.

scholars. However, Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew took a step in that direction with the publication of their monograph *Battle Exhaustion* (1990). As its title implies, the primary focus of the work was the psychiatric breakdown of Canadian soldiers in the combat zone.⁷² Though the section on battle exhaustion in Italy was quite good, the same cannot be said for the one on Northwest Europe. Not only did it lack depth and analysis, but at times the narrative read like an operational account. This caveat notwithstanding, arguably the most important insight to emerge out of the Copp-McAndrew monograph was that proper planning and preparation have a direct impact on the incidence of psychiatric breakdown in a theatre of operations.⁷³

In *Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle* (1993), Richard Allan Fox also showed how improper planning and preparation can lead to disaster on the battlefield. According to him, "common deficiencies in the readiness for combat," among them improper weaponry and poor training, were "contributing factors" in the US 7th Cavalry's defeat

⁷²Copp and McAndrew did, however, devote a number of pages to a discussion of subjects such as venereal disease and discipline.

⁷³Terry Copp and Bill McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 160. See also Bill McAndrew, "The Soldier and the Battle," *Military History and the Military Profession*, eds., David Charters et. al., 57-72.

at the Little Bighorn.⁷⁴ Of equal importance was his suggestion that contemporary military planners have much to learn from past battlefield failures.⁷⁵

Tactical failure is among the many topics covered in Christian Appy's *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (1993).⁷⁶ After a slow start, this detailed analysis of American soldiers' experiences gained momentum, covering everything from combat avoidance to the vibrant GI sub-culture that flourished on the bases and in the fetid jungles of "the Nam."⁷⁷ The book's primary strength is its successful integration of oral, archival, and documentary sources into a coherent analytical framework, making it a model of contemporary historical research.

Two comprehensive studies of Canadian soldiers also appeared in 1993. The first was Carman Miller's *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902*.⁷⁸

⁷⁴Richard Allan Fox, *Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle: The Little Big Horn Reexamined* (Norman and London: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), 270.

⁷⁵Ibid., 338.

⁷⁶A useful adjunct to *Working-Class War* is Michael Lee Lanning's and Dan Cragg's *Inside the VC and NVA: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (New York: Ballantine, 1992).

⁷⁷The chapter entitled "Drawing Fire and Laying Waste" was especially well-done. See Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 174-205.

⁷⁸Also see Carman Miller, "A Preliminary Analysis of the Socio-Economic Composition of Canada's South African War

Despite the ambiguity of the title, Miller presented an exhaustive account of the experiences of Canadian soldiers in the South African War. Ultimately, he concluded that the soldiers who served in South Africa helped shape English-Canada's "sense of distinctiveness, pride, and importance."⁷⁹

Even better was Desmond Morton's *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War*.⁸⁰ This monograph traced the wartime experiences of First World War Canadian soldiers from the time of their enlistment to their re-adjustment to civilian life. Interspersed throughout the work's chronological framework were chapters dealing with tactics, morale and discipline, sickness and health, and the experience of battle.⁸¹ Arguably the most important Canadian military history to appear in decades, *When Your Number's Up* impelled students of the First World War to reconsider a number of popularly held assumptions about

Contingents," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* (November 1975), 219-237.

⁷⁹Ibid., xiv and 458.

⁸⁰Desmond Morton, *When Your Number's Up: The Canadian Soldier in the First World War* (Toronto: Random House, 1993). Also see Morton, "A Canadian Soldier in the Great War: The Experiences of Frank Maheux," *Canadian Military History* (Autumn 1992), 79-89.

⁸¹Although Bill Rawling's *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) is often considered the definitive account of First World War soldiers' combat experiences, the work contains nowhere near the amount of detail as *When Your Number's Up*.

Canada's first civilian army.

Less satisfactory from a strictly military point of view, was George Sheppard's *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812* (1994).⁸² Although the work contained chapters on militia training, service and provisions, it also devoted considerable attention to the economic and nationalistic ramifications of the War of 1812, making *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles* more of a study in war and society than a social history of soldiers' wartime experiences.

The same can be said for Craig Cameron's *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-1951* (1994). Cameron covered much of the same ground as John Dower, although his choice of focus -- the First Marine Division -- was considerably narrower. Cameron also devoted a chapter to images of the Asian "Other" during post-Second World War Marine deployments in China and Korea. Unfortunately, he did not cover the Korean War in its entirety, and his analysis stopped rather suddenly with the Marines holding the line against the Chinese Communists in late 1951. "As it became obvious that the division would remain in the lines indefinitely," he wrote, "policies and attitudes began to

⁸²George Sheppard, *Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).

shift."⁸³ In what direction, Cameron did not say.

One of the best studies of soldiers to appear lately was Antony Beevor's *Stalingrad* (1998).⁸⁴ As its title suggests, the work examined the experiences of "ordinary" Russian and German soldiers during the siege of Stalingrad.⁸⁵ Nothing was left to the imagination in this gripping account of "the first major modern battle in a city."⁸⁶ Of the many significant insights to emerge out of Beevor's work was his contention that the sub-machine gun and hand grenade were the key infantry weapons in the close-quarter infantry engagements of Stalingrad. In this regard, the Soviets fared much better than their predominantly rifle-equipped, Blitzkrieg-trained German opponents.⁸⁷ As will be seen in the pages that follow, the Canadians encountered similar difficulties against the Chinese in Korea.

Having examined some of the most sophisticated and

⁸³Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-51* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 238.

⁸⁴Beevor's *Inside the British Army* (London: Corgi Books, 1993) was also quite good.

⁸⁵Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege, 1942-1943* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1998), inset.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, inset.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 128-129, 139, 153-156.

influential works in the historiography of soldiers and war, the feasibility and usefulness of a comprehensive study of the Canadian infantry's experiences in Korea is obvious. Such a study will vastly expand our understanding of Canada's involvement in the Korean War, and help situate it in the academic fold. As has been shown, the popular historians who currently dominate the war's historiography have created a distorted image of battlefield performance. With few exceptions they have also ignored the non-combat aspects of service in Korea. This is an especially serious omission, as Korea remains Canada's third largest war. In fact, Korea involved three times as many Canadian troops as the South African War did; yet, while we already have a comprehensive study of soldiers in South Africa, we still know nothing about the experiences of their grandsons in Korea.

An examination of soldiers' experiences in Korea will also provide contemporary military planners with a collective memory of the Canadian Army's first major UN deployment, and remind them of the consequences of improper planning and preparation. As will become clear in this study, Korea was not Canada's last "good" war. There were serious problems in the 25th Brigade, and people were killed and injured as a result. Even the non-combat aspects of service in Korea posed considerable challenges to the Canadian Army in general, and soldiers in particular. As

recent events in Somalia have shown, the military has much to learn from its own recent history. This study will facilitate the learning process.

To tie the threads of the argument together, the historiography of Canada and the Korean War has neglected the experiences of soldiers. This is a serious omission, as the methodological and thematic base for such a study is firmly established. A detailed examination of soldiers' experiences will expand our knowledge of the conflict and provide the military with a collective memory of its first major UN deployment. It is high time that this important facet of the Canadian military past received the scholarly attention it deserves.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SOLDIERS

During the summer of 1950 the Canadian government announced its intention to raise an Army Special Force for service in Korea. The public greeted the news with a tremendous amount of fanfare and in a matter of days the nation's personnel depots were overwhelmed by a flood of enthusiastic recruits. Popular historians have questioned the social fibre of these recruits, characterizing them as poorly educated, unemployed, swashbucklers. Yet, this image has never been subjected to rigorous analysis. Indeed, a random survey of personnel files reveals that the Special Force volunteers and the Active Force regulars who actually deployed to Korea were socially quite similar. But before examining their respective social backgrounds, the reasons for Canadian involvement in Korea must first be addressed.

CANADA AND THE KOREAN WAR: A CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

There were two primary reasons for Canadian participation in the Korean War: Canada's commitment to the United Nations (UN) and a sincere fear of Soviet-sponsored Communist expansion. To understand adequately these two motivations, it is necessary to briefly discuss the diplomatic and military developments that precipitated the

outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula. After thirty-five years of Japanese occupation, Korea emerged from the Second World War battered and demoralized. Liberation from Japanese subjugation, however, brought little respite for the Korean people. Under the terms of the Yalta Agreement, the Soviet Union received a zone of influence in Korea in exchange for its entry into the Pacific war. On 11 August 1945, two days after the United States dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the Soviet Union duly declared war on Japan. Within forty-eight hours, the war in the Pacific ended in unconditional surrender, and the Red Army advanced down the Korean peninsula to consolidate the allotted Soviet zone of occupation. As East-West relations began to deteriorate, the United States (US) became increasingly concerned that the Soviets might try to take control of the entire Korean peninsula. In a gambit to deny the Soviets possession of the peninsula, the American Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, boldly proposed that the Red Army terminate its advance at the 38th parallel. To the his surprise, the Soviets agreed.¹

Within a matter of months, the 38th parallel became a boundary separating two rival Koreas. In the north, the Soviets created a Communist regime led by Kim Il Sung, while in the south, the Americans backed the anti-Communist

¹Bruce Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 120-121.

Syngman Rhee. Initially, both sides poured thousands of troops into their respective spheres of influence, although neither officially recognized the partition of the peninsula. However, post-war defence budget cuts forced the Americans to reduce their military presence south of the 38th parallel. Having conceded military superiority to the Soviets, the United States submitted the Korean issue to the UN General Assembly; this diplomatic move seemed a safe bet since the US and its allies effectively dominated the UN at the time.²

By referring the Korean issue to the UN, the US hoped to reach a political solution to the division of Korea which would see all foreign troops withdrawn from the peninsula.³ In November 1947, the General Assembly duly established the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to oversee free and democratic elections throughout the country and to monitor the withdrawal of American and Soviet troops. Much to Prime Minister Mackenzie King's dismay, Canada was chosen as one of the eight member nations of UNTCOK.⁴

²Peter Lowe, "The Origins of the Korean War: Civil War," in *Major Problems in American Foreign Policy, Volume II: Since 1914*, ed. Thomas Paterson (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1989), 420.

³Bruce Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II: The Roaring Cataract, 1947-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 70-71.

⁴John Munro and Alex Inglis, eds., *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, Volume II, 1948-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 136; James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Peacemaking and Deterrence*,

In actual practice, UNTCOK proved a failure. The Soviets strongly objected to the commission, and repeatedly denied any official access to North Korea. Yet, the UN decided that the commission should continue to discharge its duties south of the 38th parallel.⁵ On 20 July 1948, Syngman Rhee was elected the first president of the Republic of Korea (ROK); official recognition of the Rhee government in the UN General Assembly came five months later. Meanwhile, a continuing commission on Korea replaced UNTOK. Canada, however, chose not to stand for reappointment when the commission was reconstituted.⁶ Concurrently, the Soviet Union supported the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north under Kim Il Sung, and gave considerable material assistance to the North Korean People's Army (NKPA).

The resulting heightened tensions in Korea finally exploded into war on 25 June 1950, when the NKPA crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea. In response to the invasion, American President Harry Truman asked for a special meeting of the UN Security Council. Because the Soviet Union was then boycotting the council over the UN's refusal to recognize China's new Communist government, the US was able to use its considerable influence to get easy

Volume III (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 14.

⁵Department of External Affairs, "Korea," *External Affairs* (Ottawa: King's Printer, [September] 1950), 341.

⁶Ibid.

passage of a resolution calling for the "immediate cessation of hostilities" and "the withdrawal of the North Korean forces to the [38th] parallel."⁷ When news of the invasion reached Ottawa, the general reaction was one of astonishment. The Secretary for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, was "caught completely off-guard by the North Korean aggression and by the United States response to it."⁸

When it became apparent that the North Koreans did not intend to comply with the 25 June resolution, the Security Council passed a second resolution calling on member nations to provide "such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel armed attack and to restore peace and security in the area."⁹ Canada quickly responded to the UN resolution. On 30 June, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent told the House of Commons that three *Tribal*-class destroyers from Canada's Pacific naval base at Esquimalt would cruise towards the Korean coast "where they might be of assistance to the United Nations in Korea."¹⁰ Immediately following the Prime Minister's statement, the leader of His Majesty's

⁷Security Council Resolution, 25 June 1950, cited in *Department of External Affairs, Canada and the Korean Crisis* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), 17.

⁸Munro and Inglis, *Mike*, 145.

⁹Security Council Resolution, 27 June 1950, cited in *Department of External Affairs, Canada and the Korean Crisis*, 21.

¹⁰*House of Commons Debates* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1950), 30 June 1950, Volume IV, 4459.

Loyal Opposition, George Drew, rose to voice the Progressive Conservative Party's support for the government's decision.

Contemporary media coverage suggests that most Canadians strongly favoured going to war in Korea.¹¹ Indeed, the editor of the *Globe and Mail* suggested that Canada's initial contribution of three destroyers was not enough.¹² The sense of obligation was strong. The *Winnipeg Free Press* commended the Prime Minister for answering the UN's call to arms:

There are, it is obvious, very few who would suggest Canada sell out responsibilities to the UN, welch on its pledges and seek to let others carry the burden of preserving peace. That Mr. St. Laurent made clear Canada would not do. This nation will do its part as an honourable member of the UN.¹³

Similarly, the *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* praised the St. Laurent government for taking a stand against Communist aggression and safeguarding "our freedom and freedom elsewhere."¹⁴ From this perspective, it is necessary to examine the reasons behind Canada's decisions to go to war.

Perhaps most important was Canada's firm support for the UN Charter. Canada played a central role in the

¹¹Both the Liberal and Conservative press reflected this consensus over the Korean question.

¹²"Canada on the Sidelines," *The Globe and Mail*, 1 July 1950, 6.

¹³"Canada and Korea," *The Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 July 1950, 19.

¹⁴"July 1, 1950," *The Halifax Chronicle-Herald*, 1 July 1950, 4.

creation of the UN in June 1945. Under St. Laurent, support for the international organization became a pillar of Canadian foreign policy. The Prime Minister made this very clear in his statement to the House of Commons on 30 June:

Our responsibility in [Korea] arises entirely from our membership in the United Nations.... Any participation by Canada in carrying out the [Security Council] resolution... would not be participation in war against any state. It would be our part in collective police action under the control and authority of the United Nations for the purpose of restoring peace.¹⁵

The other reason for Canadian participation was to counter what the government perceived to be Soviet expansionism. In the years after the Second World War, the Soviet Union gradually became the great adversary of the Western democracies. Indeed, the two sides almost went to war in 1948 when the Soviet Union, upset by the British and American amalgamation of occupation zones in Germany into Bizonia and the consequent break-down of diplomatic relations, blockaded the Western Allies in Berlin. The following year, as an iron curtain descended over Eastern Europe, Canada, the US, and Western European nations formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Cold War now began in full force.

Within this bi-polar context, Western governments

¹⁵*House of Commons Debates*, 30 June 1950, Volume IV, 4959. Canadian policy towards the United Nations action in Korea was first elucidated by Pearson on 29 June. For excerpts from Pearson's statement, see *Department of External Affairs, Canada and the Korean Crisis*, 22-23.

largely viewed North Korea's invasion of South Korea as an act of Soviet-sponsored aggression. In the House of Commons, George Drew blamed the Soviet Union for the outbreak of war, and warned that if the Soviets were not stopped in Korea, Europe itself would become the Kremlin's next target.¹⁶ Many political leaders in the Western democracies shared Drew's point of view. The "real target [of the attack] was seen as NATO," and as a founding member of the alliance, Canada "felt obliged to respond one way or another."¹⁷

Canada's press also suspected Soviet complicity. The *Vancouver Sun* claimed that "Korea alerted us to what Russia threatened."¹⁸ To the *Globe and Mail*, it was clearly "Soviet Communist imperialism that [was] waging war on the Republic of South Korea."¹⁹ And, according to the editor of the *Montreal Star*, "the Russians [were] merely carrying on a half a century old campaign to lay [their] hands on the Korean peninsula."²⁰

On 7 July 1950, the UN Security Council passed a third

¹⁶"Drew Blames Russia for Korea Attack," *The Montreal Daily Star*, 26 June 1950, 4; *House of Commons Debates*, 26 June 1950, Volume IV, 4119-20.

¹⁷Granatstein and Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping*, 101.

¹⁸"Victory in Korea," *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 July 1951, 4.

¹⁹"War in Korea," *The Globe and Mail*, 27 June 1950, 6.

²⁰"Korea, An Historic Aim of Russian Policy," *The Montreal Daily Star*, 21 August 1950, 10.

resolution which called on all contributing members to place their forces under a unified UN command, and asked the US "to designate the commander of such forces."²¹ That same day, Ottawa committed the Royal Canadian Air Force to the war by ordering the 426th (Transport) Squadron to begin operations as part of the UN's Korean airlift.

For the next month, the principal question confronting the Canadian government was whether or not to commit ground forces to the fighting in Korea. In this regard, Korea was no exception to Canada's historical reluctance to involve ground troops in overseas wars. During the first two weeks of July, St. Laurent and the Department of National Defence discussed the feasibility of sending an army contingent to Korea. On 19 July, the Prime Minister announced that the Liberal Cabinet had decided that the dispatch of "existing first line elements of the Canadian Army to the Korean theatre" was not warranted at the time.²²

The announcement incensed the press. The *Ottawa Evening Citizen* claimed that "A major decision cannot long be postponed on Korea. Canadian co-operation with American troops... offers the best prospect of effective Canadian

²¹Security Council Resolution, 7 July 1950, cited in Department of External Affairs, *Canada and the Korean Crisis*, 27.

²²Statement by Louis St. Laurent, 19 July 1950, cited in Department of External Affairs, *Canada and the Korean Crisis*, 28-30.

help.²³ And according to the *Globe and Mail*, "It will be gratifying if the Cabinet at last acknowledges this country's duty to send ground forces... The Cabinet should at once... recognize Canada's obligation and give maximum support to the UN."²⁴

As the editors of Canada's newspapers waged a war of words over Korea, Mackenzie King, the former long-time Liberal Prime Minister, died. On the train home from King's funeral in Toronto, the Cabinet further debated sending Canadian ground forces to Korea. Lester Pearson was "anxious that Canada should assume a full responsibility by sending an expeditionary force."²⁵ Other Cabinet ministers were decidedly less enthusiastic. Mackenzie King's legacy lived on. They rhetorically asked: "What would Mr. King do?" and naturally answered that "He wouldn't be getting involved." However, St. Laurent apparently supported Pearson's position, and reconsidered his earlier decision; on 7 August, he announced that Canadian ground troops would go to Korea.²⁶

²³*The Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 28 July 1950, cited in H.F. Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the defence Policy of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 22.

²⁴"Ottawa's New Brainstorm." *The Globe and Mail*, 31 July 1950, 6.

²⁵Munro and Inglis, *Mike*, 149.

²⁶Statement by Louis St. Laurent, 7 August 1950, cited in the Department of External Affairs, *Canada and the Korean Crisis*, 31-35.

The decision to commit Canadian ground troops to the fighting in Korea quickly revealed the extent to which the Canadian Army had been allowed to deteriorate after the Second World War. Defence cuts had reduced the infantry component of the Army Active Force to only three battalions, or approximately 3000 men. Tasked with the defence of the entire Canadian land mass, this skeleton of an army could spare precious few of its soldiers to meet Canada's Korean commitment. Caught on the horns of an increasingly embarrassing dilemma, the Canadian government decided to hurriedly recruit, from the streets, an all-volunteer Special Force "for use in carrying out Canada's obligations under the United Nations Charter."²⁷

However, as the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) prepared for battle it appeared as if it might not be needed in Korea afterall. On 15 September, after two months of bitter fighting along the Pusan Perimeter, UN forces under the command of General Douglas MacArthur captured the strategic port city of Inchon and began an advance up the Korean peninsula. With the North Koreans on the brink of defeat, there was talk that the war would be over by Christmas. Consequently, the Canadian government reduced its planned contribution of the CASF, and decided to send only one infantry battalion to "show the flag" and assist with any UN occupation duties. At the same time, the

²⁷Statement by Louis St. Laurent, 7 August 1950.

remaining units of the CASF moved to Fort Lewis, Washington, to complete training.

As the Canadians established themselves at Fort Lewis, there was much uncertainty over what would become of the CASF. Many believed that once training was completed it would be deployed to Europe as part of NATO. Once again, however, events in Korea intervened. On 24 November, MacArthur launched a general offensive across the UN front. As his troops moved northward, they encountered stiff resistance from Chinese forces who had crossed into North Korea in mid-October. Although they had appeared on the battlefield in considerable numbers shortly after this, the UN Command was slow to recognize Chinese involvement.²⁸

This time, however, it was different. On 26 November, Communist Chinese Forces (CCF) descended from their mountain sanctuaries and launched a massive counter-offensive in the west, followed two days later by an equally large attack in the east. Division after division of UN and ROK forces were either destroyed or forced to make a hasty retreat in the face of the advancing Chinese juggernaut. Recent scholarship suggests that the Chinese made the decision to enter the conflict well before the Inchon landing, although military unpreparedness and North Korean intransigence

²⁸Cummings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II*, 734-737.

delayed intervention.²⁹ In any event, China's entry sealed the fate of the CASF. With the war now destined to drag on for the foreseeable future, the Canadian government reversed its earlier decision and decided to send the rest of the CASF to Korea. Thus, only five years after the Second World War, Canadian soldiers would see service at the "sharp end."

RECRUITING THE SPECIAL FORCE

On 8 August a full page recruiting ad in the nation's major newspapers announced: "The Canadian Army Wants Men Now... to meet aggression in accordance with the United Nations Charter." Preference would be given to veterans of the Second World War, and the term of enlistment was for eighteen months -- "longer if required due to an emergency action taken by Canada pursuant to an International Agreement." The core of the Special Force would be second battalions of the three Active Force infantry regiments -- The Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI), and the Royal 22e Regiment (R22eR). Rounding out the Special Force's order of battle was a squadron of tanks from the Lord Strathconas Horse (LDSH), a field regiment from the Royal Canadian Horse

²⁹This contradicts the earlier interpretation that MacArthur's advance to the Yalu River precipitated Chinese intervention. See *Ibid.*, 734, and Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War, Volume II: Combat Operations* (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1996), 30-32.

Artillery (RCHA), and a squadron of Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE).

Mobilizing second battalions (and squadrons) of these renowned regiments served a dual purpose. First, the Special Force units could "latch on to their parent formations thereby expediting training and organization."³⁰ Second, the Active Force units would quickly instill the requisite regimental ethos in their respective second additions -- an important consideration, given the fact it can take years for a new unit to develop the traditions and *esprit de corps* necessary for the maintenance of high morale under adverse battlefield conditions. Initial strength of the force was set at 4960 all ranks, plus a reinforcement pool of 2105.

Thus the Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) came into being. Command of the CASF was given to Brigadier J.M. Rockingham. When the formation of the Special Force was announced, Rockingham was a civilian executive with the British Columbia Electric Company in Vancouver. He had commanded the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade during the Second World War, and was hand-picked by the Minister of National Defence, Brooke Claxton, to lead the Canadians in Korea. The decision to recall Rockingham from civilian life, rather than appoint a senior officer from the Active

³⁰Brigadier-General J.M. Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (hereafter NAC), Manuscript Group 31 (hereafter MG 31), 7.

Force, was threefold: first, Rockingham had proven himself to be an extremely capable brigade commander in North West Europe; second, he was perceived to have the ability to work well within the American-dominated UN Command; and, third, the Minister of National Defence "wanted a leader who would be a veteran from civilian life, on the same footing as the men to whom the Government was appealing to return to the Colours."³¹

Similar guidelines were used in the selection of Commanding Officers for the Special Force infantry battalions. Command of the 2 PPCLI was given to Lieutenant-Colonel James R. Stone. One of the most capable fighting soldiers in Canadian military history, Stone enlisted as a private in the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in 1939; by 1944, now a Lieutenant-Colonel, he was in command of the unit.³² Command of the R22eR was given to Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Dextraze. He had commanded the Fusiliers Mont-Royal in North West Europe and, like Stone, was commissioned from the ranks.³³ Unlike Stone and Dextraze, Lieutenant-Colonel R.A. Keane, the Commanding Officer (CO) of 2 RCR, was a regular soldier in the Active Force. He had commanded the

³¹Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 33.

³²Colonel James R. Stone, DSO, MC, interview, Victoria, British Columbia, 8 November 1994.

³³John Marteinson, ed., *We Stand On Guard: An Illustrated History of the Canadian Army* (Montreal: Ovale, 1992), 408.

Lake Superior Regiment in North West Europe, and was with the Directorate of Military Plans and Operations before his Special Force appointment.³⁴

The orderly appointment of Special Force senior officers was in sharp contrast to the recruitment of the enlisted men. Despite initial concerns that the high level of employment would lead to a shortage of recruits, there was no difficulty finding enough "soldier of fortune" types to fill the ranks of the Special Force. In the days following the Canadian government's call to arms, scores of eager volunteers descended upon their local Personnel Depots. Oral sources reveal that the overwhelming majority of volunteers enlisted with the sole intent of seeing combat in Korea. For example, a young soldier from Quebec informed a recruiting officer that while he had "no ambition for an army career," he "wanted the experience of action."³⁵ Similarly, when asked why he wanted to join the 2 RCR, Kenneth Blampied stated that he wanted "to fulfil his dream of serving for his country overseas."³⁶

Recruiters, however, were not prepared for Kenneth

³⁴G.R. Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment: Volume Two, 1933-1966* (London, ON: London Printing, 1967), 373. The Commanding Officer of 2 RCHA, Lieutenant-Colonel A.J.B. Bailey, was also a member of the Active Force.

³⁵Anonymous soldier, 2 R22eR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

³⁶Private Kenneth John Blampied, 2 RCR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

Blamplified and the thousands of eager volunteers like him. The confusion that soon prevailed in the nation's Personnel Depots has been capably described elsewhere, and need not be retold here.³⁷ Rather, it is instructive to explore the experiences of the No. 6 Personnel Depot (Toronto) in some detail. This depot provided more recruits for the Special Force than any other, and was at the centre of the recruiting fiasco.³⁸ The recruiting problems there reflect those of the CASF as a whole.

On the morning of Tuesday, 8 August, the CO of the depot, Major R.G. Liddell, was shocked to find the lawns of Chorley Park swarming with hundreds of "male civilians of every description."³⁹ Apparently, he had not heard the Prime Minister announce the formation of the Special Force on the radio the night before, nor had he seen a morning paper. Moreover, as the previous day was a civic holiday he had not yet received recruiting instructions for the Special Force in the mail.

When the doors of the No. 6 Personnel Depot opened at

³⁷See Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 27-34; and, Lieutenant C.G. Rennie, "Mobilization for War: Canadian Army Recruiting and the Korean Conflict," *Canadian Defence Quarterly* (summer 1985), 47-50.

³⁸War Diary, Adjutant General Branch, NAC, Department of National Defence Record Group 24 (hereafter RG 24), Volume 18,221, "Canadian Army Recruiting State," 28 August 1950.

³⁹"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," Directorate of History, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa (hereafter DHist), file 112.3H1,001(D9), 2.

0800, the bemused Major Liddell and his staff were quickly overwhelmed. Under normal conditions, the enlistment process took several days per man, with recruits actually lodging in a barracks at the depot. Recruits were required to fill out a myriad of forms, pass a series of aptitude tests and interviews, and have a medical examination. Only after satisfying these requirements was a recruit accepted for service and sworn in. Using this process, the No. 6 Personnel Depot provided the Active Force with up to six new soldiers each day. Obviously, it was totally incapable of dealing with the hordes of Special Force volunteers, and "complete chaos" quickly ensued.⁴⁰

As recruiting for the Special Force commenced, the No. 6 Personnel Depot received instructions to provide hourly returns showing the numbers of enlistments. The first of these showed only the five recruits who had passed selection the day before. Meanwhile, seeing the throngs of men cavorting around the depot, a reporter from the *Toronto Daily Star* erroneously announced in the evening paper that the city had enlisted 600 men in the Special Force. Unable to reconcile the *Star's* enlistment figures with his those of his own Department, Minister of National Defence, Brooke Claxton, flew to Toronto to "straighten things out."⁴¹

Arriving in Toronto on 10 August, the Minister and his

⁴⁰"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 2.

⁴¹"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 3.

entourage quickly made their way to the No. 6 Personnel Depot. "While medical officers 'thumped and listened' and naked men coughed and stretched," Claxton darted from room to room pumping hands and slapping backs.⁴² At one point the Minister asked a potential recruit if he had experienced any problems with the enlistment process. The young man responded that, as he was under twenty-one, he was ineligible for the Army's marriage allowance. A jovial Claxton informed him that he would indeed receive the allowance, despite repeated attempts by the depot Paymaster to convince the Minister otherwise. The paymaster even went so far as to cite the regulations, but to no avail. Commenting on this unexpected change in policy, an officer wrote:

I believe this later caused legal headaches as members of the Regular Army were not included for some months in this 'ruling.' I believe the [depot Paymaster] carried this ball on the [Minister's] verbal authority and instructions 'out of the blue' to ensure marriage allowance was paid even if recruits were under 21.⁴³

Claxton's impromptu change to the regulations governing the Army's marriage allowance was a boon to public relations, but did nothing to simplify the recruitment of the Special Force. Indeed, with the press shadowing his every move, the Minister jumped at an opportunity to pose in a photograph with the first soldier to enlist in the Special Force. The

⁴²"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 3.

⁴³"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 3.

photograph later appeared in the national press, although the soldier in question was subsequently released for not meeting the minimum age requirement of nineteen.⁴⁴

Claxton's visit to the No. 6 Personnel Depot was not just for publicity's sake. Concerned that recruitment procedures were too elaborate and time consuming, the pencil-chewing Minister continually asked the overworked clerks "why this documentation and that was necessary."⁴⁵ Their responses confirmed Claxton's suspicions, and at the end of the visit he retired to the officers' mess where he reportedly imbibed "three doubles" in quick succession.⁴⁶

The next day, Claxton implemented a number of measures designed to expedite recruitment of the Special Force: all applications were to be processed within twenty-four hours, interviews of perspective recruits were cut from thirty to five minutes, and the two and a half hour Educational Survey Test was jettisoned.⁴⁷ Henceforth, all Special Force recruits were to be "attested" before they were "processed." Under this arrangement, recruits were sworn in as soon as they entered a Personnel Depot and issued a chit instructing

⁴⁴The maximum age limit of Special Force volunteers was 35.

⁴⁵"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 3.

⁴⁶"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 5.

⁴⁷Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 28; Lieutenant C.G. Rennie, "Mobilization for War: Canadian Army Recruiting and the Korean Conflict," *Canadian Defence Quarterly*, Volume 15, No. 1, (summer 1985), 48.

them to return at a later date for documentation and a medical examination. In actual practice, few recruits were able to return as instructed once they reported for training. Instead, they were documented and medically examined on an *ad hoc* basis at their respective regimental training establishments. However, according to one cynical recruiting officer, the "attest first, process second" method of recruiting allowed the Minister "to publicly state the enlistment figures he wanted."⁴⁸

Not surprisingly, Claxton's reforms rendered the Army's method of screening and selecting recruits ineffective.

Lieutenant-Colonel Stone complained:

They were recruiting anybody who could breathe or walk. Brooke Claxton pushed the enlistment along because he was a politician at heart and didn't really give a damn about what else was happening. He was recruiting an army....⁴⁹

As the Special Force inductees commenced training, the consequences of Claxton's political expediency became painfully apparent. At the RCR training establishment in Petawawa, Lieutenant-Colonel Bingham, CO of 1 RCR, recalled meeting a recruit who was old enough to have served in the South African War, and another who had a wooden leg! He also remembered,

a milkman who paraded himself with a request for compassionate leave. He had left his milk truck

⁴⁸"Narrative of Special Force Recruiting," 5.

⁴⁹Colonel J.R. Stone, quoted in Granatstein and Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping*, 104.

parked outside No. 6 Personnel Depot while he went in to inquire about the Special Force. He had been swept up in the stream of recruits, and had emerged at Camp Petawawa, leaving his milk truck in the hot August sun of Toronto.⁵⁰

Other regiments reported similar occurrences. The sudden influx of recruits into the PPCLI training establishment at Calgary included a large number of what Lieutenant-Colonel Stone classified as "undesirables." Included in this collective military euphemism were "dead-beats, escapists from domestic and other troubles, cripples, neurotics, alcoholics, and other useless types," all of whom had to be weeded out before the battalion was fit for deployment.⁵¹ The scores of recruits arriving without documentation also made it difficult to determine those who had actually been enlisted: at least one civilian is known to have joined the PPCLI "on impulse," without ever setting foot in a Personnel Depot.⁵²

While chaos reigned at the training establishments, the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, reported to Cabinet on 18 August that the Special Force was up to authorized strength. However, it was

⁵⁰"Interview with Lt-Col P.R. Bingham, Commanding Officer, 1 RCR, Conducted by Lt-Col H.F. Wood on 10 May 1962," DHist, file 145.2R13(D12), 1.

⁵¹"Kapyong -- A Speech by Colonel J.R. Stone, DSO, MC, to the Officers of 3 PPCLI on 18 December 1973," Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Archives, Currie Barracks, Calgary (hereafter PPCLI Archives), box 130-1, file 130(6)-1, 1.

⁵²Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 29-30.

decided that recruitment would continue "until sufficient reinforcements for twelve months had been obtained."⁵³ With the initial rush to the colours now in abeyance, the situation at the nation's Personnel Depots gradually returned to normal. This, however, was small consolation to the Special Force units left to deal with the results of Claxton's expeditious recruiting program. The administrative and disciplinary headaches caused by these "undesirables" defies description, although a review of the Special Force's pre-deployment absent without leave (AWOL) and discharge figures provides some measure of the gravity of the problem. When recruiting for the Special Force terminated at the end of March 1951, "10,208 men had been enlisted, 2,230 had been discharged or were awaiting discharge, and 1,521 cases of desertion had been handled" of which "501 were still at large."⁵⁴ As the Official Historian observed:

The figure for discharges and unapprehended deserters, which is more than 25 percent of the total numbers enlisted, compares with 7 percent for the first seven months of the First World War and 12 percent for the same period in the Second World War.⁵⁵

These decidedly sombre statistics should not allow us to lose sight of the several thousand keen young men who

⁵³Ibid., 30.

⁵⁴Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 32.

⁵⁵Ibid.

enlisted in the Special Force and proceeded overseas with their respective units. Though they were always in the majority, these men have been overshadowed in the literature by the "undesirable" minority. Consequently, we currently know very little about the social background of the Special Force soldiers who actually served in Korea. Viewing the entire CASF through the lens of the initial recruiting fiasco, popular historians have characterized these units as being comprised of poorly educated, unemployed, swashbucklers.⁵⁶ While this is certainly true of some of the soldiers who made it to Korea, by no means is it an accurate depiction of the vast majority of Special Force soldiers. The popular historians have also assumed that most CASF soldiers had prior military experience in the Second World War or otherwise. These impressions have never been subjected to scholarly analysis, and have resulted in an exaggerated social distinction between the allegedly footloose and fancy free soldiers of the Special Force and the spit and polish regulars of the Active Force first battalions.⁵⁷ While there were differences between the two, some of the generalizations propounded by the popular historians are completely unfounded. Thus, the social

⁵⁶See, for example, Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War*, 38-42.

⁵⁷The alleged differences between the CASF and Active Force do not apply to the third battalions that were subsequently formed, as they drew their manpower from both formations.

distinction between Special Force volunteer and Active Force regular is not as clear cut as the popular historians have suggested.

THE SPECIAL FORCE AND ACTIVE FORCE COMPARED AND CONTRASTED

The exaggerated social distinction between Special Force volunteer and Active Force regular is largely the result of reliance on anecdotal evidence. Regimental histories and archives abound with apocryphal tales of swashbuckling Special Force soldiers who learned their trade not on Canadian parade squares, but on the tough battlefields of Europe. One such legendary figure was Tommy Prince, a Canadian Indian who served with the elite Devil's Brigade during the Second World War. With little formal education and a severe drinking problem, Prince found it difficult to adjust to civilian life after the war. Promoted to Sergeant shortly after his re-enlistment in the 2 PPCLI, he was supposedly "overheard lecturing a small group of volunteers in a loud voice:"

You're in the Princess Patricia's now. You are hard! You drink hard! You play hard! You love hard! You hate hard! You fight hard! You can decide what you drink, how you play, who you love. We'll decide who you hate and who you fight.⁵⁸

Popular historians have used legendary figures like

⁵⁸Tommy Prince, quoted in Granatstein and Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping*, 105.

Tommy Prince and the myths that have grown up around them to characterize the entire Special Force. While there is no doubt that he was a remarkable figure, for every Tommy Prince there were scores of normally adjusted Special Force soldiers. However, as they are not well-represented in the anecdotal evidence, the historian must turn to other evidence to obtain a more balanced sample of Special Force enlisted men.

The most useful source in constructing social profiles of military units are personnel records. This study consulted the randomly selected dossiers of 300 soldiers from the Special Force second battalions and the Active Force first battalions (fifty enlisted men⁵⁹ from each of the six battalions, or a five percent sample). Each individual dossier contained an attestation sheet that documented basic biographical information. This provided the basis for a comparison of Special and Active Force soldiers.

CASF soldiers were slightly older than their first battalion counterparts. The average age of Special Force men when they sailed for Korea was 25.2 years, compared to 23.6 years in the Active Force. The average level of formal education attained in both formations was grade eight, and

⁵⁹Unfortunately, officers' files were not as readily available. In any event, all of the Special Force officers had either held commissions during the Second World War or were serving members of the Army Active Force on loan to the CASF.

the number of soldiers who were unemployed at the time of their enlistment was identical at seven percent.

There was also little difference in their geographical origins. A full 79 percent of CASF and 77 percent of Active Force soldiers were born in their regiment's traditional recruiting areas,⁶⁰ while 84 percent and 80 percent respectively resided in these areas at the time of their enlistment. Religious affiliation in the CASF and the Active Force was almost identical, with just over half (51 and 52 percent) adhering to the Catholic faith -- a reflection, no doubt, of the R22eR presence. The rest of the men in both formations belonged to a variety of predominantly Protestant denominations, of which the Anglican Church was the largest.

Family status was also quite similar. Contrary to popular belief, CASF soldiers were slightly less likely to be single than first battalion soldiers, although of the married men, those in the Active Force were more likely to have a family. The difference between the two (69 percent and 62 percent respectively), was, however, minor.

In terms of prior military service, CASF soldiers had a wealth of experience: a full 75 percent of them had served

⁶⁰These were as follows: PPCLI, west of Ontario; RCR, English-speaking regions of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes; R22eR, French-speaking regions of Ontario, Quebec and Maritimes. Based on the personnel files examined, French-speaking recruits from Manitoba tended to gravitate towards the PPCLI.

in the military (cadets, militia, or Second World War) before their Special Force enlistment. Significantly, the first battalions also contained a surprisingly large number of men with prior military experience. Nearly half of them (44 percent) had served in the military before their initial Active Force engagement.

Age and prior military service notwithstanding, the infantrymen of the two formations were statistically quite similar. This contradicts the popular impression that Special Force soldiers were poorly educated, unemployed, swashbucklers. At the same time, however, the evidence confirms the popular historians' assertion that the majority of Special Force soldiers had served in the military before. As we have seen, the Active Force also contained many soldiers with prior military experience. In terms of social background, then, exaggerated distinctions between Active Force regular and Special Force volunteer are tenuous at best.

CONCLUSION

In hindsight, the recruitment of the Special Force was a textbook example of how not to mobilize a military unit for war. Recruitment was bedeviled by political expediency and confusion, and many unfit men were initially accepted for service. Viewing the entire CASF through the lens of

the initial recruiting fiasco, popular historians have suggested its soldiers were poorly educated, unemployed, swashbucklers. This, clearly, was not the case. Although they tended to be older and more experienced, the CASF soldiers who actually deployed to Korea were not significantly unlike their colleagues in the Active Force first battalions. The recruitment of the CASF was, alas, only the first in a series of blunders and oversights that would ultimately shape the Canadian infantry's Korean experience.

CHAPTER TWO

PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

Military training prepares soldiers to fulfil their duties in an operational context as part of a fighting unit. As Richard Holmes observed, "a great part of a man's behaviour on the battlefield, and hence of the fighting effectiveness of the army to which he belongs, depends upon training."¹ In order to be truly effective, then, training must -- wherever possible -- be tailored to the theatre of operations in question. Paradoxically, the theatre that exerted the most influence on the direction and substance of Canadian infantry training during the Korean War was Northwest Europe. With few exceptions, the training Canadian soldiers received was predicated on the assumption that they would be participating in combined-arms operations across the open expanses of Northwest Europe, not a small-unit conflict in the mountains of Korea. As a result, the Canadians found themselves unprepared for the exigencies of the Korean battlefield in three important areas: individual weapons handling, patrolling and, as the war progressed, the construction and maintenance of defensive positions. In Korea, these constituted the combat soldier's holy triad of battlefield skills -- skills which were given short shrift during the Canadians' preparation for battle.

¹Holmes, *Firing Line*, 36.

ORGANIZING THE SPECIAL FORCE

When we left the soldiers of the Special Force in the previous chapter, they had just begun to pour into their respective regimental training establishments. In the midst of this confusion, it was not possible to begin training in earnest until the middle of August. The experiences of the PPCLI during this tumultuous period are particularly well-documented, and generally reflect those of the CASF as a whole. It will therefore be useful to analyze them in some detail.

In the days following the Canadian government's call to arms, the 1 PPCLI commenced drafting and setting up a training program for its second addition. However, there was not enough time to prepare fully for the flood of new recruits. Despite 1 PPCLI's best efforts to maintain some semblance of military order, the regiment's base at Currie Barracks, Calgary, was overwhelmed. In retrospect, it is small wonder that the base's administrative and logistical framework did not crumble under the sheer weight of numbers. The kitchen, for example, operated at nearly twice its normal capacity until 20 August, while the Regimental Quartermaster's Stores ran for nearly a month on a twenty-three hour a day schedule.²

As already noted, a training cadre from the 1st

²War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 20 August 1950.

Battalion was responsible for training and administering the 2nd Battalion until it was ready to function on its own. To this end, the 16 officers and 52 other ranks of the 1 PPCLI training cadre divided themselves into schools of instruction, and recruits progressed "through the various stages of training until they emerged, basically trained, into advanced training wings."³ This system maximized precious training time by making provisions for recruits with prior military service. Thus, when 2 PPCLI began to train in earnest on 14 August, 26 recruits who had prior military experience started advanced training at neighbouring Camp Sarcee. Upon completing advanced training, these veterans would become 2 PPCLI's first section leaders. As such, they would form the foundation on which the battalion command structure would be built.

As the enlisted men of the battalion trained at the Currie Barracks, their officers, all of whom were either veterans of the Second World War or serving members in the Militia or Army Active Force, were undergoing a refresher course at Calgary. The Commanding Officer of the battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Stone, supervised the course, and ensured that it kept "pace with the recruit training."⁴

At the beginning of September, the Advanced Wing from

³War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 9 August 1950; Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 40.

⁴Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 40.

Camp Sarcee, consisting of 7 officers and 208 other ranks together with the 1 PPCLI training cadre, moved to Camp Wainwright, Alberta. Wainwright today, with its sprawling barrack blocks and computer controlled firing range, bears scant resemblance to the camp the soldiers of Advanced Training Wing encountered nearly five decades ago. To the chagrin of the troops, the camp "was 150 miles from the nearest metropolis," and access was limited to a rail line and dirt road.⁵ As a further complement to their austere surroundings, the troops were billeted in the same pre-fabricated, tar-papered "H" huts that quartered German soldiers when Wainwright was a prisoner of war camp. The officers of Advanced Wing welcomed the isolation of Wainwright; training could proceed unfettered by the remaining vestiges of the enlisted men's civilian lives.⁶ 2 PPCLI was beginning to take shape.

So were the other infantry units of the Special Force. In Valcartier, the R22eR adopted a similar approach to training as the PPCLI, and by late August had begun to train its Special Force recruits in earnest. In Petawawa, meanwhile, the RCR, "now overstrength in Special Force recruits, stopped accepting men for the 2nd Battalion and further intakes were fed into an ad hoc reinforcement

⁵H.F. Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates* (Don Mills: Longmans, 1966), 68.

⁶Colonel Jim Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.

company."⁷ By early November, all of the first battalion training programs had come to an end, and 2 PPCLI, 2 R22eR, and 2 RCR were officially accepted into their respective "regimental folds" as independent units.⁸

It is instructive to outline the organization of a Canadian infantry battalion. At the time of the Korean War, a full strength battalion comprised approximately 1000 men all ranks. At the top of the battalion hierarchy was Battalion Headquarters, consisting of 5 officers (including the battalion commander), and 45 other ranks. The backbone of the battalion was the four rifle companies -- Able, Baker, Charlie and Dog companies -- each with 5 officers and 122 other ranks. The rifle company was sub-divided into three platoons, each consisting of one officer and 36 other ranks. Within the battalion, platoons were numbered one through twelve, beginning with those from Able company. Thus, 1, 2 and 3 platoons would be from Able company, 4, 5, and 6 platoons from Baker company, 7, 8 and 9 platoons from Charlie company, and 10, 11 and 12 platoons from Dog company. The platoon in turn was further sub-divided into three sections, each of 2 non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and 8 enlisted men. Rounding out the battalion was a Headquarters (HQ) company (4 officers and 91 other ranks),

⁷Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 40.

⁸G.R. Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, Volume Two: 1933-1966* (London: London Printing & Lithographing, 1967), 219.

and a Support company (7 officers and 185 other ranks). Support company was sub-divided into four platoons -- Mortar, Carrier (machine-gun), Anti-tank, and Pioneer platoons -- which provided the battalion with close battlefield support.

It will be recalled from the previous chapter that in the aftermath of General MacArthur's capture of Inchon in September 1950, the Canadian government reduced its planned contribution of the Special Force and decided to send only one battalion of infantry to Korea, the 2 PPCLI, to "show the flag" and assist with any UN occupation duties.

With the departure of the 2 PPCLI to Korea in late November, the remaining units of the Special Force (now known as the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group) concentrated at Fort Lewis, Washington, to complete training. Fort Lewis was selected for its mild climate and large training area -- in peacetime it was the home station of the 2nd US Infantry Division. At this time the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade (25th CIB) was left with a large pool of first-line reinforcements who had been enlisted during the August recruiting drive. At the beginning of December, it was decided to form this surplus manpower into three "infantry training battalions that would operate initially at Fort Lewis on a reduced establishment."⁹ The new units were designated third battalions of the RCR, R22eR

⁹Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 82.

and PPCLI.¹⁰

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING

All Canadian soldiers who served in Korea, whether in the Special Force or the Active Force, began their military service with individual training. "Individual training," as defined by the 1950 Canadian Army training pamphlet *Training for War*, is "a comprehensive term which embraces instruction at a staff college or senior officers' school as well as the most elementary instruction in the use of arms, and implies that the student is being trained as an individual rather than as a member of a team."¹¹

For enlisted personnel, individual training had two distinct phases. The first, commonly referred to as recruit training, was six weeks in duration and endeavoured to break recruits and then remold them in the military ethos. This was achieved by subjecting them to extreme mental and physical privations. These included excessive drill, sleep deprivation, relentless physical training, harassment and

¹⁰The 3 PPCLI was subsequently attached to the 25th CIB at Fort Lewis to facilitate brigade-level training.

¹¹Canadian Army Manual of Training, *Training for War* (1950), Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Archives, Currie Barracks, Calgary (hereafter PPCLI Archives), uncatalogued file, 26.

draconian group punishments for individual transgressions.¹² Paradoxically, the first phase of individual training also cemented small-unit cohesion. Under such conditions of shared hardship the individuals recruit's civilian values and identity were expunged, and "replaced by the group spirit and group loyalties which underlie all military organizations."¹³ As Richard Holmes has shown, there is a correlation between the harshness of basic training and the cohesiveness of the unit that emerges from it."¹⁴

For most recruits, the first few weeks of recruit training were almost unbearable. The seemingly egalitarian atmosphere of the Personnel Depot was replaced by an entrenched hierarchical rank structure, in which the raw recruit clung precariously to the bottom rung. All vestiges of his civilian past -- including his hair -- were stripped away, and he was no longer permitted to wear civilian clothes. He seldom heard his first name and had minimal contact with the outside world. He quickly learned that his well-being was inextricably bound to that of his fellow recruits, and that even the slightest infraction would be rewarded with a series of expletive-laced insults from the

¹²It is significant to note that drill accounted for 40 of the 300 instructional periods in Special Force recruit training. See "2 PPCLI Basic Rifle Wing Block Syllabus, 12 August 1950," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

¹³Holmes, *Firing Line*, 36.

¹⁴Ibid., 46.

training staff. A recruit whose turnout or performance was judged to be below standard was harassed and assigned "extra duties." At the time of the Korean War, he could even be punched by an instructor. Private Stanley Carmichael recalled that his "instructors were real hardasses... I thought they would have been a little easier since most of them were not much older than me, but boy was I wrong...."¹⁵ And according to Private Bill Nasby:

The instructors were really strict and didn't have time for any whiney bullshit... I remember on one occasion a guy in my unit made the mistake of showing how well he could twirl his rifle when he should have been cleaning it... it worked out well for the rest of us because the [Sergeant] had him clean all our rifles for the remainder of the week... [it was the] last time he showed off in front of the guys.¹⁶

A recruit who persistently failed to "toe the line" also faced the wrath of his peers. A soldier in the 1 R22eR remembered "a way within the unit to keep the guys in line, because if one guy messed up, the whole section was in trouble."¹⁷ There were several ways to "keep guys in line," but the most common method was the nocturnal blanket party. The offender was pinned in his bunk under a taut blanket, and systematically beaten by his peers. One blanket party was

¹⁵Private Stanley Carmichael, 1 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

¹⁶Private Bill Nasby, 1 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

¹⁷Anonymous soldier, 1 R22eR, interview, Ottawa, Ontario, 15 July 1997. This soldier has requested anonymity.

usually sufficient incentive for the offender to clean up his act.

Recruits were also subjected to more official forms of military socialization. Lectures on regimental history were given frequently, and visits to the regimental museum were *de rigueur*.¹⁸ They also learned the motto and traditions of their regiment which they would be expected to uphold once they completed training. In the RCR, for example, recruits learned the meaning of the regimental motto of *Pro Patria*, and discovered that on February 27th the regiment commemorated the Battle of Paardenberg.¹⁹

To civilians, instruction in the minutiae of regimental life might seem picayune; however, it did perform an important function. On the one hand, immersion in regimental lore reinforced the recruit's sense that he had crossed "a well-defined border within the fabric of society," and had become "a member of an organization which, in last analysis, may require him to kill or be killed."²⁰ On the other, it solidified his new identity as a member of the regimental "family." Lance-Corporal John Murray reminisced, "I knew as part of the Patricias, I was expected to maintain a strong sense of pride and loyalty... that was

¹⁸"2 PPCLI Basic Rifle Wing Block Syllabus," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

¹⁹Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment*, 241-242, 53.

²⁰Holmes, *Firing Line*, 31-32.

something that was drilled into our heads constantly.²¹

Military socialization was the first objective of recruit training but it was not the only one. The latter stages also included instruction in basic military skills such as first aid, weapons handling, elementary field craft and an introduction to small unit tactics.²² Many veterans found this stage of recruit training to be a rehash of their earlier experiences. While Lance-Corporal William Powell rated the training by his NCOs as "fair," he "felt that when they were training us, they were still thinking about the Second World War."²³ Similarly, Private Kenneth Blampied, a veteran of the Second World War, "found many of the things [he] learned five years [earlier] were still the same."²⁴

After receiving a grounding in the basic military skills, the soldier progressed to advanced infantry training. This six-week course prepared the soldier for the individual duties he would carry out as a member of an infantry battalion. For example, if posted to a rifle company, the soldier received further instruction in small-

²¹Lance-Corporal John Thomas Murray, 3 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

²²Canadian Army Manual of Training, "Infantry Training -- Tactics," *The Infantry Battalion in Battle (1952)*, Volume 1V, PPCLI Archives, file UD163.I5, 4.

²³Lance-Corporal William Powell, 2 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 22 August 1996.

²⁴Private Kenneth Blampied, 2 RCR, interview, 24 August 1996.

unit tactics, weapons handling, field craft, field fortifications, map using and battle drill.²⁵

There is a substantial body of evidence which suggests that the Canadian Army's Advanced Training Program failed to produce what Captain W.R. Chamberlain of the Royal Canadian Dragoons called a "functional rifleman."²⁶ By this, he meant a combat soldier who was aggressive and willing to close with and destroy the enemy on "the close-range battlefield."²⁷ Heavily influenced by S.L.A. Marshall's *Men Against Fire* (1947), and citing Canadian Army Operational Research Team reports from the Second World War, Chamberlain argued that 75-85 percent of the men in the rifle platoons did not fire their weapons at the enemy.²⁸ Chamberlain (like Marshall) attributed this reluctance to fire to the soldier's pre-enlistment civilian values and inadequate training. In a *Canadian Army Journal* article that appeared one month before the first Canadians were committed to battle in Korea, he wrote:

The civilian enters his military training with this reluctance to kill firmly implanted in his mind. Nor does he at any period during his training receive any purposeful indoctrination that will motivate him in such a way that he is

²⁵"1 PPCLI Advanced Infantry Training Syllabus," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

²⁶Captain W.R. Chamberlain, "Training the Functional Rifleman," *Canadian Army Journal* (February 1951), 25.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 30.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 26.

prepared to shoot his enemy on sight without having first received a direct order to do so.²⁹

In so far as training was concerned, Chamberlain averred that the Canadian infantryman's reluctance to fire -- or "slit trench attitude" as he called it -- was the result of the Army's emphasis "on the physical and mechanical aspects of rifle training to the exclusion of the mental and moral aspects."³⁰ Chamberlain argued that most weapons training was dull and boring, and primarily concerned with teaching recruits the parts and characteristics of their weapons, how to strip them, how to clean them, and "how to transport [them] from one position to another in rifle drill."³¹

The Canadian infantry may not have received adequate instruction in even these basic skills. The 3 RCR's Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell complained that his men's "great fault (and it is the fault of the whole army) is... they have no proper regard for... their equipment, weapons, [and] ammunition...."³² And when "asked what policy he would adopt in training his company if he had to do it all over again," 2 PPCLI's Major R.K. Swinton affirmed:

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 28.

³¹Ibid., 27.

³²"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, OC 3 RCR, 7 September 1953," DHist, file 410B25.013(D57), 2.

In the 2 PPCLI we had the greatest difficulty in making the men take care of their own personal kit... losses even included ammunition. There was a case in the battalion when we were first committed to action in Korea, when one company made a three hour climb to occupy a particularly high feature. When they reached the top one man reported he had left his ammunition behind. The company commander made him go all the way down the mountain to pick it up, and return immediately. It taught the soldier a very good lesson and he never forgot it, nor did any of the others in the company. However, if sufficient time had been devoted to teaching such basic things as this to the soldier when he first joined the Army, such carelessness would never have happened.³³

The drill-hall approach to weapons training was replicated on the firing range. Troops marched out -- by day -- to a level field where they were lined up and instructed to lay down in the prone position. On command, they commenced firing at a two-dimensional black and white target that was always posted at hundred yard intervals to correspond with the graduations on their rifle sights.³⁴ Firing was by the book, and woe betide any soldier who displayed initiative in either his firing position or choice of target. As Chamberlain correctly pointed out, this method of weapons training had little in common with actual battlefield conditions. In combat, the soldier was rarely presented with a level firing surface, and firing positions had to be adjusted "to piles of rubble, trees, brush or the

³³"Interview with Major R.K. Swinton, OC D Coy 2 PPCLI concerning questions on training by Hist Offr 25 Cdn Inf Bde," DHist, file 145.2P7031(D1).

³⁴Ibid.

odd dead body."³⁵ Moreover, the target was rarely stationary, almost never at fixed ranges, and usually fired back.

To overcome the Canadian rifleman's "slit trench attitude," Chamberlain recommended that recruits be subjected to constant indoctrination to foment aggressiveness. "It is not a question of engendering hatred for the enemy in the recruit's mind," he wrote, "but of impressing upon him that his sole function is to kill the enemy, and if he does not perform that function when the opportunity presents itself, he is useless."³⁶ The available evidence suggests that the Canadian Army did not take Chamberlain's recommendation to heart: in a report published in June 1953, Major Harry Pope identified "a defensive attitude" and "a strong desire not to close with the enemy on the part of troops," in Korea.³⁷

Chamberlain also advocated a more realistic weapons training program that made use of "three-dimensional targets of lifelike proportions," left the initiative to fire with individual riflemen, and which taught them:

to fire under fire, and under the noise and disturbances of battle so that when he takes the field he will react to enemy action in an aggressive manner, and not merely 'shoot back'

³⁵Ibid., 28.

³⁶Ibid., 29.

³⁷"Paper on Infantry Patrolling in Korea By Major W.H. Pope, 23 June 1953," DHist, file 410B25.0033(D5), 1.

but 'shoot first.'³⁸

This was easier said than done, for the process of familiarizing recruits with the audio and visual characteristics of the battlefield was fraught with insurmountable bureaucratic hurdles during the Korean War. Known as "Battle Inoculation," this type of training called for the use of live fire and pyrotechnic devices in manners not normally deemed safe in peacetime. Battle inoculation exercise during the Second World War, for example, often used Vickers machine-guns mounted on tripods to fire live rounds five degrees to the flank of soldiers negotiating "assault" courses.³⁹ In 1950, however, peacetime rules governing the use of live fire in training were still in effect. Thus, when it was decided that Canadian ground troops would take part in UN operations in Korea, there were severe restrictions on the use of live fire in training schemes. Astonishingly, the Department of National Defence refused to relax the peacetime restrictions, and no Canadian soldier to serve in Korea took part in live fire battle inoculation exercises during individual training in Canada.⁴⁰

³⁸Chamberlain, "Training the Functional Rifleman," 28.

³⁹"Training Syllabus for 2 PPCLI," DHist, file 327.039(D5).

⁴⁰War Diary, Headquarters Western Command -- Canadian Army Special Force, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,229, 11 September 1950.

The inadequacy of Canadian weapons training was brought to the attention of the Vice-Chief of the General Staff, Major-General H.A. Sparling, in November 1952 when he visited Canadian units in Korea. He was informed that the level of individual weapons handling under battlefield conditions was depressingly low.⁴¹ On his return to Canada, Sparling instructed the Directorate General of Military Training [DGMT] to determine "how individual training [could] be adjusted to produce the desired results."⁴² The DGMT duly investigated the matter, but no instructions for an amended individual training program appear to have been issued before the soldiers of the third battalions -- the last Canadian troops to see combat in Korea -- embarked for the Far East. Indeed, in summarizing his battalion's experiences in Korea after the war, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell reported that "it was always necessary to run specialist courses" in weapons "techniques."⁴³

A possible explanation for the general inadequacy of Canadian weapons training is that it simply reflected the doctrinal belief that individual rifle fire meant very little to the overall conduct of operations. Certainly on

⁴¹"Training - 25 Cdn Inf Bde Group, 12 December 1952," Training, General, 25th CIB, Volume 1, DHist, file 111.41(D22).

⁴²"Training - 25 Cdn Inf Bde Group, 12 December 1952," DHist, file 111.41(D22).

⁴³"Summary of Experience - 3 RCR, 25 March 1954," DHist, file 145.2R13019(D1), 13.

the European battlefield masses of armour and artillery were expected to decide the outcome of any conventional engagement. In such a scenario, rifle fire was relegated to a marginal role, reinforcing the popular dictum that "Artillery [and armour] conquers, Infantry occupies." In the mountains of Korea, however, where the roles were largely reversed and a high standard of individual weapons handling was absolutely essential, the results of inadequate weapons training quickly became evident.

Another oversight in the individual training of the Canadian infantryman which reflected this European focus was the lack of instruction in the maintenance and construction of defensive works. As has been seen, the latter stages of advanced training included instruction in fieldcraft and field fortifications. It was at this time that recruits were introduced to the infantryman's second-best friend: the spade.

Most soldiers despise digging, and the training Canadian recruits received during the Korean War certainly did nothing to correct this. Aside from the occasional hastily dug fox-hole or shell-scraper (a trench with overhead protection), recruits did comparatively little digging of the kind that was called for in Korea.⁴⁴ With the shift to

⁴⁴"2 PPCLI Basic Rifle Wing Block Syllabus, 12 August 1950," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file; "1 PPCLI Advanced Infantry Training Block Syllabus," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 1.

static warfare in late 1951, the inadequacy of Canadian training in the construction and maintenance of defensive positions gradually became apparent. According to a bulletin entitled "Training Hints for A Battalion Destined for Korea," issued by the DGMT in late 1952, Canadian troops required more training in laying barbed wire, constructing and maintaining fighting trenches and bunkers, and in "the correct method of filling and laying sandbags."⁴⁵

The available evidence suggests that the soldiers of the 3 RCR and the 3 R22eR were given extra instruction in these areas before they embarked for Korea in the spring of 1953. At Valcartier, for example, the soldiers of 3 R22eR built a Korean-style defensive position on a small hill in the centre of the camp just prior to their deployment.⁴⁶ While this was undoubtedly a step in the right direction, it was, in hindsight, too little, too late. "Training Hints for A Battalion Destined for Korea" was issued too late to be of any use to the soldiers of 3 PPCLI who embarked for the Far East in October 1952, and, as Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell explained, "it [was] not possible to do effective field training after the summer of 1952."⁴⁷ Thus, although

⁴⁵"Training Hints for A Battalion Destined for Korea," no date, Training, General, 25th CIB Volume II, DHist, file 111.41(D22), 2-3.

⁴⁶"Interview, Lieutenant-Colonel J.G. Poulin, CD - 4 July 1953," DHist, file 410B25.013(D53), 1.

⁴⁷"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 1.

he considered his men to be better trained than those in the second or first battalions "when they left North America," Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell still found himself confronting a serious shortcoming in the individual training of his men.⁴⁸

Inadequate weapons training and a lack of instruction in the maintenance and construction of defensive positions were only the first shortcomings to appear in the training cycle of the Canadian infantryman; as training progressed and became more specialized there would be another.

COLLECTIVE TRAINING

On completion of advanced training, the individual infantryman was ready to take his place in the order of battle. However, he still had to be trained to function as part of sub-unit within the infantry battalion. This was the object of collective training. According to the 1950 Canadian Army manual of Training, *Training for War*, "collective training means exercises and maneuvres, the keynote of both being realism."⁴⁹

Collective training, like individual training, may be divided into two distinct categories. The first, sub-unit

⁴⁸"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 1.

⁴⁹Canadian Army Manual of Training, *Training For War* (1950), PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 34.

training, is progressive starting with the smallest sub-unit, the infantry section, and continuing upwards to the company level. On completing sub-unit training, companies undergo formation training at the battalion, or unit, level. Unit training, therefore, is synonymous with battalion training, and is the final stage of training before an infantry soldier is ready for battle.

With the exception of 2 PPCLI, all Canadian infantrymen underwent collective training at North American camps. When 2 PPCLI embarked for Korea the soldiers of the battalion had not yet started collective training. Few were troubled by this as it was believed that the Patricias would not be taking part in active operations. However, the changed tactical context which greeted the soldiers of 2 PPCLI upon their arrival in Korea made it absolutely imperative that they complete collective training as soon as possible. To this end, the Patricias moved to a training camp at Miryang, fifty miles north of Pusan. As it turned out, the necessity of having to complete collective training in the rugged hills above Miryang was a blessing in disguise. From the outset, the Patricias learned how to survive and manoeuvre over the type of terrain they would be fighting over. Their close proximity to the front also ensured that their training program incorporated the tactical lessons that were being learned by UN forces

already engaged in active operations.⁵⁰ Mastery of these tactical lessons was one of the contributing factors to the battalion's successful defence of Hill 677 during the Battle of Kap'yong in April 1951. But while the Patricias' tailor-made training program proved beneficial in the short-term, it shared an important deficiency with the collective programs of the other Canadian units to serve in Korea: a lack of emphasis on patrolling.

Patrolling is an inseparable part of field operations to the extent that an Army that does not patrol vigorously and effectively quickly surrenders the tactical initiative to the enemy. This was particularly the case in Korea, where the mountainous terrain placed a premium on small-unit patrol skills. Moreover, with the occupation of static lines of defence in late 1951, it became essential to control the approaches leading from the valley floors, or "no-man's land," to the hilltop defensive positions. Failure to dominate this vital ground gave an attacking enemy the element of surprise and the ability to harass or ambush one's own patrols.

The Canadian infantry used four different types of patrols in Korea.⁵¹ The first and most common was the standing patrol, which varied in size from three or four men

⁵⁰"Sitreps By 25th CIB," DHist, file 419FE.009(D4), 4.

⁵¹The engineers also sent out patrols to repair wire and lay minefields.

to a complete section. Standing patrols went out regardless of the weather, usually at last light, and occupied a stationary position to the Canadians' front. Their purpose was to observe and report enemy movement and to call down artillery fire on any troop concentrations in the area. Reconnaissance, or "recce," patrols seldom numbered more than three men, and their purpose was to provide field commanders with intelligence on enemy dispositions. Recces would often "lay-up" in no-man's land for several days, placing an enormous physical and emotional strain on the men in the patrol. Nuisance, or roving, patrols could contain up to twenty men, whose job it was to harass the enemy in no-man's land or on the approaches to his own positions. Fighting patrols varied in strength, but could, at times, involve an entire company; their purpose was to seek out and destroy the enemy through one of two means: an ambush or a raid. Ambushes usually required fewer men than a raid, and were set along routes or paths thought to be travelled by the enemy. Raids, on the other hand, were launched against enemy positions to destroy field fortifications and to capture prisoners. With the renewal of peace talks at Panmunjom in the fall of 1951 and the UN Command's concomitant policy of "active defence," ambushes and raids became the primary means through which the enemy was brought

to battle.⁵²

Patrolling in Korea was, therefore, a highly "specialized craft."⁵³ Successful patrolling was dependant on sound collective training, particularly at the section and platoon levels. According to Canadian Army training pamphlet, *The Infantry Battalion in Battle (1952)*:

The successful collective training of an infantry battalion depends above all on... a high standard of rifle and specialist platoon training. Each platoon must be thoroughly trained as a team in the various phases of battle and every rifle platoon must be capable of carrying out the role of a fighting patrol.⁵⁴

However, patrol reports and training bulletins from the Korean War indicate that the Canadians did not meet the standard outlined in the official doctrine. The first indication that Canadian soldiers were not adequately trained in patrol techniques came shortly after the 2 PPCLI were committed to battle. A training bulletin prepared for Army Headquarters in Ottawa reported:

Conduct of foot patrols by day and night has not been up to required standards. Patrols have failed to

⁵²Truce talks were first initiated on 10 July 1951 at the village of Kaesong, but had broken off after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on the location of a demarcation line. Shortly after the resumption of talks at Panmunjom, the UN Command ordered the 8th Army "not to engage in further offensive operations but instead to maintain an active defence."

⁵³Granatstein and Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping*, 158.

⁵⁴*The Infantry Battalion in Battle (1952)*, DHist, file UD163.I51952, 9. This passage also appeared in *Training for War (1950)*.

penetrate to depths required to gain contact and locate forming-up areas; they have failed to observe the area they were to patrol prior to departing, to select alternate routes, to obtain the information required by their missions, and to return by previously designated routes. Often they have been incapable of reporting what they have seen.... Our training must cover more thoroughly these basic subjects and place more emphasis on night patrolling.⁵⁵

The Patricias were not the only ones to discover that insufficient attention had been paid to patrolling during their collective training -- most other Canadian infantry units to serve in Korea appear to have experienced similar problems.⁵⁶ So pronounced was the 25th Brigade's inability to patrol vigorously and effectively that in May 1953 Brigadier Jean-Victor Allard⁵⁷ instructed one of his most capable staff officers, Major Harry Pope, to look into the matter.

Pope published his findings on 2 June 1953 in a paper entitled "Infantry Patrolling in Korea." He argued forcefully that "for the past year and more the enemy has held the tactical initiative in no-man's land."⁵⁸ Reiterating many of the shortcomings in Canadian patrol

⁵⁵"Extracts From OCAFF Training Memorandum No. 3, 13 March 1951," Training, General, 25th CIB, Volume I, DHist, file 111.41(D22), 1.

⁵⁶See, for example, "Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR", 7.

⁵⁷Brigadier Allard assumed command of the 25th Brigade on 21 April 1953.

⁵⁸Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 1.

techniques cited above, Pope averred that "with only one or two exceptions," the Canadians had "not carried out any successful [patrol] operations forward of [their] own lines."⁵⁹ According to Pope, the 25th Brigade had simply been outclassed by a skilful and determined opponent who used specially trained troops to raid and ambush Canadian patrols "at will." Pope was not solely concerned with the training implications of the 25th Brigade's inability to patrol effectively; his paper raised a number of related issues which will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. Nevertheless, Pope's findings did expose the extent to which Canadian infantry units had neglected patrolling in their pre-deployment collective training programs.

Predictably, not all Canadian battalion commanders were impressed with Pope's findings. Chief among them was Lieutenant-Colonel H.F. Wood, the Canadian Official Historian and Commanding Officer of 3 PPCLI in Korea. In *Strange Battleground*, the Official History of the Canadian Army in Korea, Wood summarized some of Pope's more salient findings at length and then attempted to discount them in a decidedly condescending footnote worth quoting here. Wood wrote:

It is to be noted, however, that Major Pope's generalizations are based, in the main, on his experience as a regimental officer. The application to other units of all his statements would probably

⁵⁹Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 1.

not be valid without more evidence than is available.⁶⁰ In actuality, Major Pope was a highly experienced field officer, having served with distinction in the Italian campaign and Northwest Europe, and two tours in Korea with the R22eR before his appointment to Brigadier Allard's staff.⁶¹ Perhaps Pope's resignation from the Army in 1959 over NATO nuclear policy and his subsequent affiliation with the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation⁶² afforded Wood some leeway in attacking Pope's battlefield credentials in an Official Department of National Defence publication. Moreover, contrary to what the Official Historian claimed, there is evidence which supports Major Pope's conclusions and the thesis that Canadian infantry units did not place enough emphasis on patrolling during their collective training programs -- evidence that Wood either did not see or chose to ignore.

During his visit to Korea in late November 1952 (by which time Lieutenant-Colonel Wood's battalion had been in Korea for a month), Major-General Sparling had also been informed that "more emphasis" needed to be placed on patrolling in Canadian collective training programs.⁶³ The

⁶⁰Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 241.

⁶¹Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, 126-127.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 133.

⁶³"Training - 25 Cdn Inf Bde Group, 12 December 1952," Training, General, 25th CIB Volume II, DHist, file 111.41(D22).

bulletin "Training Hints for A Battalion Destined for Korea" which appeared towards the end of 1952 made a similar appeal.⁶⁴ However, as has been seen, patrolling was supposed to be an integral part of any collective training program, regardless of the operational situation in Korea or elsewhere. Why, then, did the Canadians find themselves inadequately trained for patrol operations in Korea?

With the obvious exception of 2 PPCLI whose collective training program was largely devoted to the tactics of hill-top defence,⁶⁵ those of the other Canadian infantry battalions to serve in Korea were primarily geared towards preparing for combined-arms operations across open terrain -- not small-unit patrol actions in the mountains of Korea. As David Bercuson has observed, the Canadian Army of the early 1950s was "structured, equipped, trained, and located to fight a major all-arms battle alongside Canada's NATO allies against the Soviet army."⁶⁶ Even the units of the Special Force who completed collective training at Fort Lewis adopted a combined-arms focus, although it must be

⁶⁴"Training Hints for A Battalion Destined for Korea," no date, Training, General, 25th CIB Volume II, DHist, file 111.41(D22), 2-5.

⁶⁵Brent Watson, "From Calgary to Kap'yong: The Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry's preparation for Battle in Korea, 1950-1951" (University of Victoria: unpublished MA thesis, 1995).

⁶⁶David Bercuson, *Significant Incident: Canada's Army, the Airborne, and the Murder in Somalia* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1996), 93.

admitted that at this time the war in Korea had not yet become static.⁶⁷ To make matters worse, it was subsequently discovered "that the ground of some of the training areas [at Fort Lewis] was hardly varied enough to be entirely satisfactory."⁶⁸

The emphasis on combined-arms operations was hardly unique to the 25th Brigade units that trained at Fort Lewis: all of the other infantry battalions who subsequently prepared for battle on the open expanses of Canadian training areas seem to have adopted a similar focus. Commenting on the collective training he received at Wainwright, Private Stanley Carmichael of 1 PPCLI stated:

I was shipped out to Currie Barracks with the [1 PPCLI] and then up to Wainwright where we really learned [sic] most of our training... Looking back on my Korean experience, I realize [we] were not prepared for the Korean terrain... most of the area we would occupy in Korea was pretty mountainous and deep terrain, yet at Wainwright we practiced a lot of open exercises which at the time seemed to make sense to me.⁶⁹

The focus on European-style mobile warfare was also in evidence at training camps in the East. Corporal James Wilson of 1 RCR averred that during training at Camp Petawawa, "the young snot-nosed officers" were constantly "trying to establish a battlefield like Germany as opposed

⁶⁷Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 10.

⁶⁸Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 83.

⁶⁹Private Stanley Carmichael, 1 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

to the realities of Korea."⁷⁰ And according to Lieutenant-Colonel L.F. Trudeau, Commanding Officer of 1 R22eR, "When faced with training men for [Korea], [I] knew there would be difficulties, given that most training had prepared [himself] and others for the European landscape, and not the Korean terrain."⁷¹

As has been seen, the third battalions tried to orient their training "more and more" to Korean conditions.⁷² For example, during training at Camp Wainwright in the summer of 1952 provisions were made for the third battalion rifle companies to attend the Canadian Army Mountain Warfare Course at Jasper, Alberta. Though this was a step in the right direction, these exercises were the exception to the rule: collective training continued to be devoted primarily to cross-country combined-arms exercises at the battalion- and brigade-levels.⁷³ Moreover, as was the case with individual training, the DGMT bulletins which appeared towards the end of 1952 calling for an increased emphasis on patrolling in Canadian collective training programs appeared too late to be of any significant use to the 3 RCR and the 3 R22eR.

⁷⁰Corporal James Wilson, Royal Canadian Signals and 1 RCR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

⁷¹Lieutenant-Colonel L.F. Trudeau, Commanding Officer, 1 R22eR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

⁷²"Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel J.G. Poulin," 1.

⁷³Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment*, 263.

The end result of the 25th Brigade's insufficient patrol training was that Canadian infantry units deployed to Korea ill-prepared for the operations they would subsequently be called upon to carry out. Several battalion commanders in Korea attempted to compensate for their men's lack of training by conducting patrol courses when their units were in reserve. However, it was not until May 1953 that the 25th Brigade finally opened a patrol school in Korea. As the Official Historian conceded, this came "too late in the day" to be of any use, and "no startling changes in general patrol experience became evident" during the last two months of the war.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Canadian infantry training during the Korean War contained serious deficiencies at both the individual and collective levels. Weapons training was not entirely suited to combat conditions, and there was a general disregard for training in the construction and maintenance of fieldworks. At the collective level, there was a lack of emphasis on patrolling, as training was largely geared towards preparing soldiers for European-style combined-arms operations. Deficiencies in these areas meant that with few exceptions, the Canadian infantry took to the field largely unprepared

⁷⁴Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 241.

for the combat conditions encountered in Korea. Though efforts were made to improve the standard of individual and collective training in the 25th Brigade, these usually came too late to offer any practical benefit. A similar pattern emerges in regards to the infantry's small arms and personal equipment.

CHAPTER THREE

EQUIPMENT

One of the key factors in soldiers' combat performance is the quality of their equipment. During the world wars, this had been based on British designs to the extent that it was often difficult to differentiate Canadian infantry units from their Commonwealth counterparts. In Korea, 25th Brigade fighting men were outfitted with a mixture of Canadian, British and American equipment for the first time.¹ Though they continued to carry British-pattern small arms, never before had they used Canadian kit, or relied on American support weapons. Thus, the Korean War may rightfully be considered a watershed in the technological evolution of the Canadian infantry. However, with the exception of support weapons, this evolution was not to Canadian soldiers' advantage. As the war in Korea progressed, they found themselves increasingly ill-equipped to meet the operational exigencies of static warfare.

EQUIPPING THE CANADIANS FOR BATTLE

When the Korean War broke out the Canadian Army was still largely equipped with Second World War, British-

¹During the Second World War, the 6th Canadian Division and the Canadian troops who participated in the Kiska invasion had been issued with some American equipment.

pattern equipment. As World War gave way to Cold War, plans to re-equip the Active Force with the latest in American military hardware were countenanced. "From cook-stoves to bath-trailers to howitzers and rocket launchers Canadian units were to be supplied with US style equipment."² Due to many factors, including US export laws and Canada's shortage of American dollars, little new equipment had reached Active Force units by June 1950.

The Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, discussed the state of Canadian infantry equipment with Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent in July 1950, when they met to examine the feasibility of sending a Canadian expeditionary force to Korea.³ Foulkes recommended that Canada raise an infantry brigade to operate within a yet to be formed "Commonwealth" division. Fighting as part of a "Commonwealth" division would allow Canadian field forces to use British supply lines, and hence reduce costs. Moreover, Canadian field commanders were used to British methods of command, control and communications, since all of their training and indoctrination had been done on British lines. Finally, it was alleged that the enlisted ranks of the Canadian expeditionary force would likely

²Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 85.

³War Diary, Vice Chief of the General Staff, "Extract From Minutes of Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting Held In the Office of the Minister On 17 July 1950," NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,220, August 1950.

contain a large number of veterans, who were accustomed to British traditions, small arms, training and tactical doctrine.

Following the government's decision to commit Canadian ground troops to Korea, Cabinet formally decided that the 25th CIB would be equipped with British-pattern small arms. However, as the 25th CIB began to take shape it became obvious that operational capabilities demanded that some of the infantry's equipment be replaced immediately. A review of existing stocks of kit and equipment concluded that the Canadian Army's berets, great coats, boots, putties, socks, mitts, ground sheets, blankets, underwear, undervests, steel helmets, entrenching tools and tents were unsuitable for issue to the 25th Brigade.⁴ Moreover, as the Canadian official historian observed, "the existing wool battledress had been designed for use only in Western Europe," and was not considered suited to Korea's extreme climatic conditions.⁵ The Quarter Master General (QMG), Major-General N.E. Rodger, was instructed to procure suitable replacements. Winter combat suits, ponchos and peaked caps "were among the new items eventually provided."⁶

The Canadian infantry's British-designed 2- and 3-inch

⁴HQS 8747-13-2, Equipment, General, Volume II, October 1949 - September 1951, DHist, file 112.3M2(D410), 1.

⁵Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 35.

⁶Ibid.

mortars, and 2.36-inch "bazooka" rocket launcher were also deemed unsuited to operations in Korea because of their limited range. Situation reports from the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade [27th BCIB], who, by September 1950, had already been fighting in Korea for a month, described actions during which North Korean mortars outranged the 27th BCIB's 3-inch mortars by as much as 2,000 yards.⁷ During such engagements, the need for artillery support placed an even greater strain on field artillery regiments. Similarly, reports from the front during the first crucial weeks of the war described infantry-armour engagements in which the 2.36-inch rocket projectile bounced off the armour of North Korean tanks at ranges of only 30 yards.⁸

In view of these shortcomings, Foulkes asked his American counterpart for assistance. After a series of lengthy discussions, the Americans agreed to provide the Canadians with their latest infantry support weapons.⁹ Meanwhile, as expected, the British agreed to allow the Canadians to use their lines of supply in Korea, maintain

⁷Appendix "A" to HQS 3201-151/25, "British Information From Korea," Training General, 25th Canadian Army Infantry Brigade Group, Volume I, DHist, file 111.41.(D22), 4.

⁸"Notes On Korean Situation of Chief of General Staff, 28 June to 11 July 1950," War Diary, Chief of General Staff, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,220, July 1950.

⁹The Americans were also asked to provide field rations. See Chapter Ten.

the 25th Brigade's British-type small arms, and supply ammunition for British-type weapons. The Canadians themselves were responsible for providing "non-common user items," such as combat clothing and personal kit.¹⁰ Thus, for the first time in Canadian military history, Canadian soldiers would go into battle outfitted with weapons and equipment from three different national sources. As will be seen, however, this *ad hoc* mixture was not entirely suited to combat conditions in Korea. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the 25th Brigade's kit and clothing.

KIT AND CLOTHING

In battle, the individual infantryman must be self-sufficient to a certain point. Extra ammunition, clothing, rations, water, rain gear and emergency medical supplies, must be carried if the soldier intends to survive on the battlefield for any amount of time. The web equipment used by the soldiers of the 25th Brigade during the Korean War was the Canadian version of the British 1937-pattern webbing. The British had themselves discarded the despised 37-pattern shortly after the Second World War, in favour of their superior 44-pattern. In any event, the Canadians' 37-

¹⁰HQS 6001-151/25, Equipment, General, 25th CIB, Volume VIII, DHist, file 111.41(D19). Although based on British designs, Canadian small arms also fell under the rubric of "non-common user items."

pattern webbing was completely unsuited to battle conditions in Korea.¹¹ Assembling and adjusting the webbing's numerous straps was inconvenient, the small pack lacked space, and miscellaneous items of equipment could not be clipped onto the belt.¹² The pouches were too short to carry Sten magazines, leaving soldiers to stuff them into their pockets where they rattled around and were damaged.¹³ More ominously, there was no provision for carrying hand-grenades on the 37-pattern webbing. These were also jammed into pockets where they bounced around with a metallic clang. Even worse, some soldiers hooked them through their belts, with potentially tragic results. Lieutenant Brian Munro recalled:

Everybody was issued two grenades; we carried them on our belts. One time we were moving by vehicle; one of the soldiers was sitting at the back of the truck, near the tailgate. One grenade shook loose of his webbing and fell out the back of the truck. It landed on the

¹¹Most Canadian Battalion Commanders considered the British 44-pattern webbing, with its eyelet belt, snap-on pouches, and roomy pack, ideally suited to conditions in Korea. See Corry, "Notes On Equipment In Korea," DHist, file 410B25.003(D2), 2.

¹²Results from questionnaire; Corry, "Notes On Equipment In Korea," 2. Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell was especially critical of the 37 Pattern Webbing's inability to carry the Canadian issue poncho and cup, "two things that the soldier is almost never without." See "Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 4.

¹³"Report On 1 RCR Action Night 23/24 October 1952, 25 November 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, NAC, RG 24 Volume 18,339, December 1952, Appendix 28, 6.

road, the pin fell out and it exploded....¹⁴

Several salient items of Canadian combat clothing were equally unsuited to the operational conditions encountered in Korea. In 1950, the Canadian infantry's standard combat headdress was still the wide-brimmed 1914 pattern Mark II steel helmet. Originally designed to protect soldiers in the trenches of the First World War from shell fragments and airdropped flechettes, the Mark II steel helmet became obsolete in the early 1940s with the advent of the American M1 "steel pot" helmet and the British "assault" helmet.¹⁵

Defence planners had initially hoped to outfit the soldiers of the 25th Brigade with American helmets, although this was scrapped when it was discovered that the earphones of the Canadian No. 19 wireless set were incompatible with the new headgear.¹⁶ As signalmen comprised only a fraction of an infantry battalion's strength, the decision not to equip Canadian soldiers with American helmets was totally

¹⁴Lieutenant Brian Munro, 2 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 318.

¹⁵The American M1 "steel pot" helmet had a removable fibreglass liner which supported the helmet's suspension system. In the field, the liner could be removed and the steel shell used for cooking and washing. The design of the M1 helmet and the British "assault" helmet were decided improvements over that of the Canadian Mark II helmet, in that they afforded greater protection to the neck, temples and forehead.

¹⁶War Diary, Branch of the Quarter Master General, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,225, 2 October 1950.

ludicrous. There is was no reason why Canadian signalmen, most of whom had no operational requirement for protective headgear, could not have continued to use the old Mark II helmet while their compatriots in the fighting echelon wore the superior American, or indeed British, helmet. In any event, when the Canadians deployed to Korea they did so with the same helmets that their fathers had worn in the trenches of World War One.

Because the Chinese initially possessed little in the way of mortar and artillery support, steel helmets were rarely worn during the first year of the war. Veterans of 2 PPCLI fondly recall throwing their steel helmets overboard as their troopship approached Pusan Harbour.¹⁷ However, with the shift to static warfare and the concomitant increase in Chinese artillery capabilities, helmets became a battlefield necessity. In this changed tactical context, the obsolescent Mark II helmet proved to be less than satisfactory. Commenting on the shortcomings of the Canadian helmet, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell wrote:

The steel helmet of the Canadian Army is the most poorly designed, uncomfortable, useless, stupid-looking and unpopular piece of equipment issued to Canadian soldiers. Of all its faults, and there are many, the liner is the worst.... In winter, the Canadian soldier must put on a garment which looks like an egg warmer i.e., the balaclava [sic]. His helmet is left perched on top of this offering less protection and looking

¹⁷Corporal George Cook, 2 PPCLI, interview, 24 June 1994.

even sillier than before.¹⁸

As usual, Campbell's recommendations for a new design fell on deaf ears, and the Mark II remained in Canadian service until the late 1950s.

Helmets were seldom worn on patrol. In its place soldiers wore the equally useless Canadian peaked cap.¹⁹ Designed in late 1950 with the parade square in mind, the cap came in two patterns: the "winter" version was made of heavy serge wool, and had no provision for ear coverage; the "summer" version was made of cotton, and incorporated a folding tail piece that could supposedly be extended to protect the back of the neck from sun glare. This was seldom used,²⁰ as its tight design prevented the free movement of the head and neck.²¹

Both patterns of peaked cap were incompatible with the hood of the poncho -- another item of kit first used by the Canadians in Korea -- and undermined its effectiveness. During the Battle of Chail-li, for example, the peak capped- and poncho-clad soldiers of 2 RCR were drenched by "the most

¹⁸"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9.

¹⁹Balaclavas could also be worn on patrol during the winter months.

²⁰Photographs from the Korean War clearly depict that the tail flap was seldom used.

²¹This assertion is based on an examination of a Canadian summer peaked hat in the author's possession.

violent rain and windstorm yet experienced by the Brigade in Korea, and within 30 minutes the troops were soaked and chilled."²² Reporting on the incompatibility of the peaked cap and poncho, the Battalion Intelligence Officer (IO), claimed that "there is a great variety of opinion on [the poncho]. It is useful for bed rolls and shelters and may be efficient as a rain cape if suitable headdress becomes available."²³ The report went on to recommend that a new headdress based on the British-pattern tropical bush hat, with "sufficient all around brim to prevent rain entering by the neck," be developed.²⁴ This was not done, leading several companies in the Brigade to request that the Second World War British-pattern gas cape "be brought into use again."²⁵ The hoodless gas cape could be cinched tightly around the neck, thereby compensating for the Canadians' lack of a suitable headdress.

Winter combat suits were also unsuitable. The first troops to arrive in Korea wore the 1949 pattern Canadian Arctic parka and windproof trousers. The outer shells of both the parka and trousers were made of heavy 6 1/2 ounce

²²"The Battle of Chail-li - 2 RCR, 20 May 1951, by Hist Offr 25 Cdn Inf Bde Gp," DHist, file 145.2R13013(D2), 3.

²³"The Battle of Chail-li," 8.

²⁴"The Battle of Chail-li," 8.

²⁵"General Report, OC 'A' Coy, 3 June 1951," DHist, file 145.2R13013(D2), 1.

khaki coloured cotton poplin. Insulated by a heavy wool pile liner, the fabric was impermeable to wind, quiet, and generally gave good service.²⁶ Oral sources unequivocally confirm this assertion; during the winter of 1950-1951, a Canadian winter suit fetched upwards of \$100.00 (US) on the Korean black market.²⁷ Indeed, even the enemy was known to strip dead Canadians of their 1949 pattern parkas and windproof trousers.²⁸

During the winter of 1951-1952, the 25th Brigade was issued with an "improved" winter combat suit constructed of a loose weave nylon. In hindsight, nylon was a poor choice for the suit's shell material. It was neither windproof nor water resistant, and "produced a lot of static electricity."²⁹ As most of the 25th Brigade's heating devices were fuelled by gasoline, the Canadians wore their winter suits in close proximity to a bunker stove at their peril.

Nylon was also extremely noisy. Lieutenant Bob Peacock recalled that "the noise the nylon made from rubbing together as you walked was audible for quite a distance on

²⁶War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 4 January 1951.

²⁷Results from questionnaire; Corporal George Cook, 2 PPCLI, interview, 24 June 1994.

²⁸War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 28 February 1951; Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 64.

²⁹Peacock, *Kim-Chi, Asahi and Rum*, 77.

crisp, clear nights. A patrol wearing nylon parkas and windpants could be heard long before it could be seen."³⁰ As we shall see later, excessive noise was last thing Canadian soldiers needed in the deafening silence of no-man's land.

The poor quality of the winter combat suit also made Canadian soldiers susceptible to environmental injuries. In Korea's sub-Arctic climate improper clothing could kill a soldier nearly as fast as an enemy bullet. Commenting on the sorry state of Canadian winter clothing, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell wrote, "It seems unbelievable that Canada is far behind the United States and UK in the design of winter clothing... the UK pattern was preferable. The nylon... used in Canadian winter clothing is completely unsatisfactory. Also its appearance is bad."³¹ Outfitted with shoddy winter kit, many Canadian soldiers attempted to re-equip themselves with superior British or American clothing, or even the old 1949 pattern parka and windproof trousers.³²

The Canadians' wool battledress uniforms were marginally better. Originally designed in the late 1930s for use in Western Europe, battledress was considered

³⁰Ibid.

³¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 3.

³²Peacock, *Kim-Chi, Asahi and Rum*, 77.

obsolete by the 1950s.³³ During the Second World War, the Americans set the trend in modern field uniforms with the development of a general purpose cotton uniform. At war's end, the British began testing their own version of a general purpose combat uniform. The Canadian Army adopted a "wait and see" policy in regards to new field uniforms, resolving to replace battledress with a general purpose uniform once an acceptable design became available.³⁴ At the outbreak of the Korean War, testing was not complete, and Canadian troops were issued with modified versions of their respective Second World War pattern battledress uniforms.

Battledress was not completely unsuited to the climatic conditions encountered during the winter months in Korea, but most Canadian soldiers found the heavy serge wool material of the uniform scratchy and uncomfortable.³⁵ Moreover, battledress was extremely difficult to keep clean in the lice-infested bunkers of the *Jamestown* line. As a result, at least one battalion in the 25th Brigade allowed its soldiers to wear the marginally superior Canadian summer

³³Wood, *Strange Battleground*, p. 35; Equipment, General, October 1949 - September 1951, Volume I, DHist, File 112.3M2(D410).

³⁴Equipment, General, October 1949 - September 1951, Volume I.

³⁵"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 3.

uniform,³⁶ supplemented with thermal underwear, throughout the winter months, reserving battledress for leave in Japan.³⁷

Boots were equally troublesome. The Canadian pattern "ammunition" boots wore out "very rapidly," and were not considered suitable for the Korean theatre.³⁸ Moreover, in Korea's wet monsoon season the Canadian issue puttees restricted circulation "to the extent of causing lameness."³⁹ Ammunition boots were especially unsuited for patrolling. They were clumsy and noisy, and were a constant source of blisters.⁴⁰ Several battalions in the 25th Brigade compensated for the lack of appropriate footwear by issuing their men with superior British or American boots.⁴¹ But what the Canadians really needed was a lightweight canvass patrol boot similar to the one worn by the Chinese.

³⁶During the monsoon season, a cotton poplin "bush" uniform was issued in lieu of battledress. The jacket of this uniform was found to be "quite unsuitable for operations in this theatre," but it was a decided improvement over battledress. See "Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 3.

³⁷"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 3.

³⁸War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 4 January 1951; "The Battle of Chail-li," 7.

³⁹Corry, "Notes On Equipment in Korea," 1.

⁴⁰"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 4.

⁴¹War Diary, 2 PPCLI, January 1951; Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 58; Colonel J.R. Stone, interview, Victoria, BC, 8 November 1994; Corry, "Notes On Equipment In Korea," 1.

This they did not receive, and for the duration of the war the Canadians were forced to tramp around no-man's land in their heavy ammunition boots.

Overall, the Army's first operational experience with uniquely Canadian kit and combat clothing left much to be desired. While some Canadian kit and clothing did perform well in Korea, the most important items were unsuited to static warfare in general, and patrolling in particular. A similar pattern emerges in regards to small arms.

SMALL ARMS

Small arms are the weapons the soldier operates at the section level -- the smallest sub-unit in the Canadian Army's order of battle -- and at the time of the Korean War included the light machine-gun, the rifle, the sub machine-gun and the hand grenade.⁴² These were considered basic infantry weapons and all who served in the 25th Brigade were trained, to varying degrees of competence, in their operation.

The light machine-gun (LMG), or section automatic weapon (SAW) in contemporary military parlance, was the most powerful weapon that a soldier could expect to operate at the section level. During the Korean War the Canadians,

⁴²*Infantry Training, Volume IV: Tactics (1950)*, DHist, file UD325.I5, 14.

and indeed all of the Commonwealth forces in Korea, used the .303 Bren LMG. Fed from a 30-round magazine, the weapon could deliver up to 120 rounds, or four magazines, per minute.⁴³ At this rate of fire, the barrel had to be changed every 2 1/2 minutes.⁴⁴ Barrel changing was a simple procedure, taking an experienced Bren gunner only seconds to complete. A red hot barrel could be cooled by air after removal or dipped in water without damaging the metal.

The 22 pound gun was serviced by a two-man crew and was primarily designed to be fired from a bipod in the prone position. It could be fired from the hip in the "assault" position, but this required considerable training, not to mention upper body strength, to be effective. In other words, the Bren was not especially suited to the type small-unit, hit and run skirmishes over rough terrain that were such a feature of the fighting in Korea, especially during the last 18 months of the war. The Commanding Officer of the 3 R22eR, Lieutenant-Colonel J.G. Poulin, maintained that the Bren "proved an awkward weapon whenever taken on patrol and would have been advantageously replaced by the machine carbine or a semi-automatic rifle."⁴⁵

⁴³Denis H.R. Archer, ed., *Jane's Infantry Weapons 1976* (London: Jane's Yearbooks, Paulton House, 1976), 340.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵"Summary of Experiences - 3 R22eR, 4 February 1954," DHist, file 410B25.013(D53), 2.

The Bren also lacked a suitable tripod. This was not a concern when the battlelines in Korea were fluid, but with the shift to static warfare there was a requirement for a tripod so that the Bren could be fired from bunkers along fixed lines. 3 RCR's Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell explained:

The provision of inter-locking small arms fire was a problem. Because of the steepness of the slopes and many ridges and re-entrants it was often only possible to get fire in front of a [section position] by getting it from another platoon.... The only solution was found to be in the use of fixed lines.... Unless the bren-gunner... had a definite task he tended to wait for the enemy to appear directly in front of him. As a result the weapon was useless.⁴⁶

Unfortunately for the Canadians, the Bren's tripod was "unnecessarily clumsy" and "not suitable for use in a bunker."⁴⁷ This had an adverse effect on the Bren's ability to fire on fixed lines, and led to a greater reliance on rifle fire. As Canadian tactical doctrine dictated that rifle fire develop around Bren gun action, the result was a significant decrease in the amount of firepower available at the section level.

The Bren's reduced effectiveness would not have been so serious had Canadian soldiers been equipped with a better rifle. The standard Canadian rifle during the Korean War was the bolt-action No. 4, the last in a long pedigree of

⁴⁶"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

⁴⁷"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

Lee Enfield rifles to see service with Canadian troops.⁴⁸ Fed from a ten round magazine, the No. 4 had to be reloaded after each shot by operating the bolt. In the hands of a trained soldier, the rifle could fire up to 15 rounds per minute.⁴⁹ This rate was generally found to be adequate during the first year of the Korean War, when rifle and Bren gun fire could be properly coordinated according to tactical doctrine.⁵⁰ Although it did not fire as fast as the semi-automatic M1 Garand, the standard American infantry rifle, the No. 4 rifle initially had one important advantage over its American counterpart: it was virtually jam-proof.

Adverse battlefield conditions were a fact of life during the first year of the Korean War. Snow, freezing rain, mud and dust all conspired to wreak havoc on the mechanisms of semi-automatic and automatic weapons. American accounts from the winter of 1950-51 often describe actions during which M1 Garands failed to fire, their mechanisms having been locked into place by heavy frost and freezing rain.⁵¹ Moreover, according to one official

⁴⁸Canadian troops first used an early version of the Lee Enfield during the South African War.

⁴⁹Corporal George Cook, 2 PPCLI, interview, Kelowna, BC, 24 June 1994.

⁵⁰Results of historical questionnaire (hereafter questionnaire), circulated among veterans of 2 PPCLI, November 1994.

⁵¹See, for example, S.L.A. Marshall, *The River and the Gauntlet* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1953), 49.

American report, "Casualties have been incurred by our troops because of malfunctioning of automatic or semi-automatic weapons at critical times. Investigation revealed that the malfunctions were caused by excessive dirt or dust on moving parts."⁵²

The No. 4 rifle, however, seldom failed under even the most difficult conditions. As Bill Rawling pointed out, "that first quarter turn to the left required with the [Lee Enfield's bolt] was almost always sufficient force" to clear an obstruction or jammed casing.⁵³ Commenting on the superiority of the No. 4 rifle over the M1 Garand, Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds wrote, "I have recently had a report from 2 PPCLI in Korea which includes a statement to the effect that under the conditions of frost and mud in the theatre they have found that a hand-operated rifle is more reliable than the automatic...."⁵⁴

With the shift from mobile to static warfare the primary advantage of the No. 4 rifle became its greatest liability. The construction of semi-permanent defensive

⁵²HQS 3201-151/25 (Trg 5), 28 May 1951, Training General, 25th Canadian Army, Infantry Brigade Group, Volume I, 2.

⁵³Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 12.

⁵⁴Lieutenant-General G.G. Simmonds, CGS, to Colonel A.E. Wrinch, Canadian Army Staff, Washington D.C., 2 April 1951, "Sitreps and Notes On Fighting In Korea," DHist, file 314.009(D464), 2.

positions reduced the exposure of weapons to the elements, and cleaning kits and graphite lubrication were readily available in the front line. Lulls in the fighting also provided ample time for routine cleaning and maintenance. Thus, the conditions that initially gave hand operated mechanisms the edge over automatic mechanisms largely ceased to exist with the consolidation of the *Jamestown* defensive line. More importantly, in the close quarters combat of patrol actions and in the defence of positions against massed attack, the No. 4 rifle's bolt action was dangerously slow. The 3 RCR reported:

In static defence the rifle is almost useless... It has not the rate of fire to stop mass attack. It is too clumsy and slow for the action that develops when the enemy succeeds in getting into our trenches. It cannot produce the volume of quickly adjusted fire necessary in sudden night patrol actions.⁵⁵

As the war progressed and the unsuitability of the No. 4 rifle became increasingly obvious, several Canadian officers called for its immediate replacement. In a study of infantry patrols in Korea, Major Harry Pope of the 3 R22eR recommended that a light automatic replace the No. 4 rifle "in all operations of war."⁵⁶ Pope was not alone in his condemnation of the No. 4 rifle. The 3 RCR's Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell also recommended replacing the

⁵⁵"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 1.

⁵⁶Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 13.

No. 4 rifle with "a fully automatic short range weapon."⁵⁷ Campbell did not identify any specific replacements, and his general approach to the rifle question was much more cautious than Pope's. While Pope advocated the wholesale abandonment of the No. 4 rifle in favour of a new weapon for the Canadian Army, Campbell emphasized that his opinions applied only to static warfare in Korea. In an interview with the Brigade Historical officer, he maintained:

In a completely static war such as this, almost everyman now armed with a rifle should have instead [an automatic]. In a mobile war the difficulties of ammunition supply make it unfeasible to have the men so armed but here in Korea, at this time, there is no particular problem in getting ammunition to the front and everyone can be armed with an automatic weapon.⁵⁸

Campbell's obligatory references to the unique circumstances surrounding the fighting, and to the inherent superiority of a rifle over an automatic in mobile warfare, reflected the general impression in Ottawa that the war in Korea was an aberration. To the Army brass, mobile warfare on the central European front was the "real" war, for which Canadian soldiers ought to be equipped and trained.⁵⁹ Anything that deviated from the European model was of secondary importance and could be brushed aside. Moreover,

⁵⁷"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 1.

⁵⁸"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 8-9.

⁵⁹Denis Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

those at the top of the military hierarchy could always sidestep the rifle issue by pointing to the generally satisfactory performance of the No. 4 during the mobile operations of 1951. Not surprisingly, Pope's and Campbell's calls for a new weapon fell on deaf ears, and the No. 4 rifle remained the standard Canadian infantry weapon until 1957.

Outgunned by their adversaries who were well-equipped with Soviet-designed "burp-guns,"⁶⁰ Canadian soldiers went to extraordinary lengths to acquire replacements for their No. 4 rifles. The weapon of choice was the American M2 carbine, a light, .30 calibre self-loading rifle issued to NCOs and specialist personnel. These could be obtained on the black market that flourished behind the front line, or through barter with American soldiers. The usual price was one bottle of Canadian whiskey, although this could increase according to demand.⁶¹

Having obtained an M2 carbine was no guarantee that a soldier could use it. While some units, notably 2 PPCLI and 1 RCR, permitted their men to carry non-issue weapons, others did not. Moreover, NCOs and junior officers often "requisitioned" their men's M2 carbines for their own use.

⁶⁰Contemporary military vernacular for a sub machine-gun.

⁶¹Sapper Lorne Warner, 23 Field Squadron, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 22 August 1996.

A soldier recounted:

I got my hands on [an M2 carbine], but it was taken away from me by the same [lieutenant] who couldn't read a map if his life depended on it... He took it away, and I knew for a fact that the other officers made damn sure they had a .30 calibre M2 handy... the guys at HQ didn't understand our situation.⁵²

Indeed they did not, for the Canadian sub machine-gun (SMG), the only other weapon officially available to Canadian enlisted men, was also dangerously inadequate in the close quarters combat of static warfare. The standard Canadian SMG of the Korean War was the 9mm Sten gun. With only 47 parts, the Sten was designed in England for cheap, mass-production during the early stages of the Second World War. Still in Canadian service at the outbreak of the Korean War, the Sten was initially issued to only NCOs, medics, radio operators, drivers and the crews of support weapons. However, with the advent of static warfare in Korea there was a tactical requirement for more SMGs and Stens were issued on an increased scale.⁶³

The Sten suffered from a number of mechanical and design flaws which became increasingly pronounced as the war progressed. The weapon's safety catch was unreliable, making it a continual source of battle accidents. Standing

⁶²Corporal William (Bill) Lee, 2 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, August 21, 1996.

⁶³Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 11. According to official Canadian doctrine, there was one Sten gun per rifle section.

Orders in 1 RCR forbade soldiers from loading their Sten guns "unless there was an imminent danger of enemy attack."⁶⁴ The lips of the Sten magazine were also easily bent, and were the primary cause of morale sapping battlefield malfunctions.⁶⁵ A driver in the 54th Transport Company recounted how he and his navigator were almost killed by a sniper after their Sten gun jammed in the middle of a fire-fight.⁶⁶ Another soldier was adamant that "a lot of good guys died because they were stuck with shitty [Sten] guns."⁶⁷ Indeed, a 1 RCR patrol report for 31 May/1 June May 1952, recorded that "several Stens failed to fire when required."⁶⁸ Perhaps the most telling indictment of the Sten was expressed in the laconic words of an anonymous soldier from 3 PPCLI: "The Sten gun was a fuck'in piece of crap."⁶⁹

In examining the battlefield performance of the Sten gun in Korea, one is reminded of the Ross rifle fiasco of

⁶⁴"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9.

⁶⁵Archer, *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, 285.

⁶⁶Private Bill Martin, 54th Transport Company, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 22 August 1996.

⁶⁷Corporal Bill Lee, 2 PPCLI, interview, 21 August 1996.

⁶⁸"Preliminary Report On 1 RCR Fighting Patrol, Night 31 May/1 June 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,314, June 1952, Appendix 4, 2.

⁶⁹Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

the First World War. However, unlike their fathers in the trenches of Flanders Fields, the soldiers of the 25th Brigade never received a replacement for their Sten guns. Though Battalion Commanders routinely criticized the Sten in their after action reports, no attempts were made to equip the Canadians with a more reliable sub machine-gun.⁷⁰ In an official report prepared for the Commander of the 25th Brigade, Major Harry Pope explicitly called for the adoption of the superior British Patchett SMG or, even better, the Australian Owen gun,⁷¹ but to no avail.⁷² Faced with a Hobson's choice, soldiers routinely ditched their Sten guns in favour of the equally unsuitable, but more reliable, No. 4 rifle.⁷³ It was not until after the Korean War that the Canadian Army finally replaced the notorious Sten with the British Patchett.⁷⁴ In the meantime, combat performance in Korea suffered accordingly.⁷⁵

⁷⁰See, "Notes On Equipment in Korea - by Capt GD Corry d/5 Jul 51," DHist, file 410B25.003(D2), 3. The Sten remained in service until 1957.

⁷¹The Australian Owen gun had a reputation for reliability under the most adverse battlefield conditions.

⁷²Pope, "Infantry Defences In Korea," 7.

⁷³"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

⁷⁴The Patchett, subsequently re-named the Sterling, was adopted by the Canadian Army under the designation SMG C1A1.

⁷⁵This observation is based on the results of interviews with Korean veterans conducted during the 1996 Korean Veterans Association Conference in Calgary, Alberta; "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9.

The Canadian infantry section's paucity of firepower led to an increased reliance on hand grenades. This was particularly the case in the defence, where the Canadian's British-designed Type 36 hand grenades were trundled down the steep slopes of hilltop positions into the masses of attacking Chinese infantry. Used in this manner, and in the more conventional "bunker busting" role during the advance to the 38th parallel, the Type 36 hand grenade was extremely effective. In the routine patrol actions of the static war, however, the Type 36 was far from ideal.⁷⁶ The grenade's substantial weight limited its range and the thrower often found himself in the bursting area of his own weapon. The Chinese, on the other hand, made extensive use of light-weight concussion grenades.⁷⁷ The stick-shaped Chinese grenade could be hurled much further than the heavier egg-shaped Type 36, and had a smaller bursting area. In the featureless terrain of the valley bottoms, the Chinese could shower Canadian patrols with grenades with little danger to themselves.⁷⁸ Using this tactic, the Chinese were often able to gain the initiative which they were quick to exploit

⁷⁶"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

⁷⁷Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 13.

⁷⁸Canadian soldiers often referred to stick grenades as "Chinese firecrackers." See "Battle Report, 'C' Coy, 2 RCR - 7 Jun 51," DHist, file 145.2R13013(D2), 1.

with fire from their burp-guns.⁷⁹ At this point, the rifle-equipped Canadians could do little to regain the tactical initiative.

In view of the Type 36's unsuitability in Korean patrol actions, several Canadian officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell and Major Pope included, pushed for the development of a new "offensive" grenade. Once again, calls for a new weapon went unanswered and the Canadians were forced to make do with the weapon at hand. Thus, the lack of an effective offensive grenade in the latter half of the Korean War was the final chapter in a sorry tale of High Command ignorance. From improper LMG tripods to dangerously unreliable sub-machine guns, the Canadian infantry section was improperly armed for static warfare in Korea. As we have seen, several Battalion officers in Korea called for the development of more appropriate weaponry, but Defence headquarters in Ottawa ignored their requests. Consequently, soldiers were forced to carry out their duties with weapons that were unsuited to the tactical conditions they encountered. Fortunately for the Canadians, their American-pattern support weapons were better designed.

INFANTRY SUPPORT WEAPONS

⁷⁹Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 13.

The most powerful weapons used by the Canadian infantry in Korea were mortars. According to the Canadian Army training manual *The Infantry Battalion In Battle (1952)*, a mortar is:

a close support weapon with a high trajectory. It can give overhead fire support from behind steep cover and can engage targets which are themselves defiladed from flat trajectory weapons. The mortar is capable of producing a high rate of fire which is limited only by the amount of ammunition available.⁸⁰

The Canadians generally used two types of mortars in Korea, the 81mm and 60mm.⁸¹ Procured directly from American sources, these replaced the British 3- and 2-inch mortars in 25th Brigade service just before the first Canadian ground troops were committed to battle in Korea.

The 81mm mortar was a battalion support weapon; its primary purpose was to kill enemy personnel.⁸² It was capable of firing a 7 1/2 pound high-explosive shell to a maximum range of 4,000 yards, 1,200 yards further than the 3-inch mortar.⁸³ The rapid rate of fire was 12 bombs per

⁸⁰Infantry Training, Volume IV, Tactics, *The Infantry Battalion In Battle (1952)*, PPCLI Archives, file UD16.I5 1952 vol. 4, 28.

⁸¹The Canadians also used the heavier, American 4.2-inch mortar towards the end of the war, but only in very limited quantities. Some battalions also retained the British 2-inch mortar.

⁸²S.L.A. Marshall, *The River and the Gauntlet* (Westport: Greenwood, 1953), 370.

⁸³Denis H.R. Archer, ed., *Jane's Infantry Weapons, 1976* (London: Jane's Yearbooks, Paulton House, 1976), 509-510,

minute, although this could be considerably increased in an emergency. Their substantial weight (107 pounds each, not including ammunition), made them too heavy to be man-packed into action. Obviously, this was not a problem during the static war. During the earlier mobile phase, however, the "81s" were mounted for travelling on US-pattern M3A1 half-tracks, another new addition to the Canadian infantry's arsenal.

The 81mm was generally regarded as a superb weapon. Lieutenant-Colonel Stone believed that it played an indispensable role in saving his battalion from annihilation during the Battle of Kap'yong in April 1951, as did Lieutenant-Colonel Dextraze during the Battle of Hill 227 seven months later.⁸⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell also considered the "81" a "good weapon, with no apparent weakness," and claimed that "there was throughout [the 3 RCR] complete faith" in it.⁸⁵

The 60mm mortar was essentially a smaller version of the 81mm mortar. The weapon could fire a M492A high explosive bomb to a maximum range of 1,939 yards, nearly

528.

⁸⁴See Stone and Casagruay, *Korea 1951: Two Canadian Battles*.

⁸⁵"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

five times further than the weapon it supplanted.⁸⁶ The 60mm mortar's maximum range was often used with devastating effect, but it was not without its detractors. Canadian soldiers often grumbled about the 60mm mortar's complexity, and the weapons's illumination round was often unreliable and in very short supply. Moreover, according to the 3 RCR:

[The 60mm mortar] is a good weapon [but] it is definitely not a platoon weapon as was the 2-inch mortar and its place in the battalion organization has not yet been found. It was used in the defence satisfactorily at company level, especially for the provision of flares, but it was really duplicating the role of the 81mm mortar and it really only served as insurance in cases 81mm fire could not be provided.⁸⁷

Another new American-pattern support weapon whose role was not clearly defined was the 3.5-inch rocket launcher. Anti-tank weapons had been critical during the first few months of the war, but by the time the first Canadians took to the field in early 1951 enemy armoured vehicles were seldom encountered.⁸⁸ In any event, the 25th Brigade's 3.5-inch rocket launchers were truly state-of-the-art. Constructed of aluminum, the tube broke into two sections for carrying, a useful feature when operating in Korea's mountainous terrain. More importantly, the weapon was

⁸⁶Archer, *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, 527. The 60mm mortar, like the 81mm mortar, could fire training, illumination and smoke rounds, in addition to high explosive.

⁸⁷"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

⁸⁸Unlike the North Koreans, the Chinese did not possess any significant armoured capability.

capable of penetrating the frontal armour of a T-34 tank -- a target the Canadians never had an opportunity to fire on -- at 100 yards.⁸⁹ Still in the laboratory stage of development in June 1950, the 3.5-inch replaced the 2.36-inch in time to be taken into combat with the 2 PPCLI in February 1951, where it was used with some success in the anti-personnel and bunker-busting roles.

With the shift to static warfare, the 3.5-inch rocket launcher became redundant. The Canadians, however, continued to use the heavier 75mm recoilless anti-tank rifle, a tripod-mounted, direct-fire weapon, with an effective range of 6000 yards. Another first-rate American weapon,⁹⁰ the 75mm gradually superseded the British-designed 17-pounder in 25th Brigade service, a weapon that Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell claimed was "as extinct as the Dodo."⁹¹ With no tanks to shoot at, the Canadians used their 75mm recoilless rifles to knock-out enemy snipers and observation posts. They also used it in the indirect role to bolster the fire-power of the mortar platoon's 81mm

⁸⁹"Appendix F to Notes On Fighting In Korea, Bulletin No. 7, 28 May 1951," Training General, 25th CIB, Volume I, DHist, file 111.41(D22), 2.

⁹⁰The Commander of the 1 R22eR, Lieutenant-Colonel Trudeau, "spoke very highly of the 75mm recoilless rifle." See "Account of Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Trudeau, Choksong-Myon Area, 21 April 1953," DHist, file 410B25.013(D41), 1.

⁹¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 2.

mortars.⁹²

Rounding out the 25th Brigade's battalion-support weapons were machine-guns. The Canadian Army's standard medium machine-gun during the Korean War was the British-designed Vickers .303 Mk 1 medium machine-gun (MMG).⁹³ The Vickers was a water-cooled, belt-fed gun, "capable of feats of endurance that almost matched those of the men that fired it."⁹⁴ Operating on a simple gas-assisted short recoil system, the Vickers could fire 10,000 rounds an hour -- so long as it had an ample supply of water, ammunition, and spare barrels -- making the weapon especially suited to the static defensive role. Though the Vickers was heavy (90 pounds including water and tripod), and emitted a stream of water vapour when hot, most Canadian soldiers had nothing but praise for the gun. Indeed, the Vicker's extraordinarily long service life testified to its quality, a factor, no doubt, in the decision to retain this weapon for service in Korea. First used by the Canadians in the trenches of Flanders Fields, it was not officially declared obsolete until 1968.⁹⁵

⁹²"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 7. The 3 RCR actually employed their anti-tank platoon as a mortar platoon.

⁹³At the time of the Korean War, a Canadian machine-gun platoon was equipped with six Vickers guns.

⁹⁴Archer, *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, 335.

⁹⁵Archer, *Jane's Infantry Weapons*, 335.

Although the Canadians refused to trade their Vickers for the American M1917 Browning, a weapon that shared many of the same characteristics and fulfilled the same role as the Vickers, the 25th Brigade did use two other US-pattern machine-guns in Korea: the .30- and .50-inch Browning. These modern, air-cooled weapons had originally been fitted to the M3A1 halftracks to provide protection for the dismounted mortar crew, but with the advent of the static war they were incorporated into the front line defences. Both were considered "good weapons," although at least one Canadian battalion commander felt "that with proper tripod mounts for the Bren" the .30-inch Browning "would lose its desirability."⁹⁶ This did not prevent both weapons from being officially adopted by the Canadian Army after the Korean War.

CONCLUSION

The official adoption of the Browning family of machine-guns was yet another example of the technological evolution that occurred in the Canadian infantry at the time of the Korean War. As has been seen, the Canadian Army's break with the British technological model simultaneously went too far, and not far enough. Korea was the first time

⁹⁶"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 3.

that soldiers went into battle wearing uniquely Canadian kit. However, British kit was generally superior, and would have been a better choice for Canadian fighting men. Although they performed well enough during the mobile phase of the Korean War, the Canadians' outmoded British-pattern small arms were completely unsuited to static warfare. In so far as SMGs were concerned, anything -- whether it have been the newly developed British Patchett, Australian Owen, or even the American "Grease Gun"⁹⁷ -- would have been better than the Canadian Sten gun. The one area where the technological evolution was to the 25th Brigade's advantage was in infantry support weapons. With the exception of the Vickers for which no superior American replacement could be found, the Canadian Army went to war in Korea equipped with the very latest in American infantry support weapons. This, together with improper training, had a pronounced impact on the Canadians' battlefield performance in Korea.

⁹⁷Military vernacular for the American M3 SMG.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE VOYAGE TO THE FAR EAST AND IMPRESSIONS OF KOREA

If the soldiers of the 25th Brigade were improperly trained and equipped for battle, they were equally unprepared for the non-combat aspects of service in the Far East. Most possessed only a superficial knowledge of Korea before their deployment, and the 25th Brigade's shipboard indoctrination program certainly did nothing to improve this. Thus, when the Canadians disembarked from their troop-ships in war-torn Pusan harbour they recoiled from the smell, dirt, poverty and cultural mores which confronted them. By the time they reached the front line, many soldiers in the 25th Brigade had formed the impression that Korea was a God-forsaken place, populated by a seemingly primitive, and even brutal, people. Some even went so far as to question the purpose of Canada's involvement in the war. But all this still lay in the future. Before they even reached Korea, the Canadians had to endure a monotonous, and at times unbearable, sea voyage across the Pacific into the "Domain of the Golden Dragon."¹

DEPLOYMENT AND INDOCTRINATION

The long voyage to Korea began when the soldiers of the

¹Contemporary naval term for the Far East.

25th Brigade clamoured aboard their transports for the move to the Seattle docks, the point of embarkation for most Korea-bound Canadian fighting-men.² For the Special Force battalions this entailed only a short bus ride from nearby Fort Lewis;³ for later battalions, especially those from the RCR or R22eR, this involved a considerable overland journey by rail. Fresh from embarkation leave, many of the men were in a festive spirit and reports of drunkenness and harassment of civilian passengers were common.

On arrival at the Seattle docks, the departing Canadians formed-up to hear their Commanding Officers's embarkation orders. These normally outlined the men's duties, and explained what was to be expected of them on their impending voyage:

On board ship, it being a USA vessel, there will be no liquor... in its place there will be lots of training. Instead of drinking beer, we'll be studying tactics, learn the odd word of the Korean language, do PT and generally get so fit that we will be worthy representatives of our country.⁴

On dismissal, the Canadians heaved their personal weapons and kit onto shoulders which still ached from the most recent round of pre-deployment vaccinations, and climbed up the narrow gangplank into the bowels of their American

²Some Canadian soldiers sent to Korea as reinforcements were flown by US Air Force or RCAF transport.

³With the departure of the second battalions to Korea, the third battalions concentrated at Wainwright for training.

⁴War Diary, 2 PPCLI, Appendix 17, November 1950.

troop-ships. Having stowed their kit and secured their weapons, most scurried up to the top decks for a final glimpse of the North American continent. For some, it would be their last.

The reference to learning "the odd word of the Korean language" in the embarkation orders cited above is revealing, for it was during the month-long sea voyage that the Canadians were to receive their Korean indoctrination.⁵ From the outset, however, the Canadian ship-board indoctrination program was far from satisfactory. Lectures were ostensibly given for one hour each week by a senior NCO, who himself knew next to nothing about Korea, in an informal setting known as "Soldier's Forum."⁶ These rarely dealt with specifically Korean topics, but rather the reasons for Canadian involvement in Korea, "the principles of the UN [Charter], and the meaning of Communism and its objectives."⁷

Attendance at "Soldier's Forum" was also highly

⁵Ironically, the officer who issued these orders later stated in an official report that his men made absolutely no attempt to "pick-up the [Korean] language" during their tour in the Far East. See "Reports By Lieutenant-Colonel Stone On Activities of 2 PPCLI in Korea," DHist, file 145.2P7013(D6), 9.

⁶"Training, 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade On Current Affairs," no date, DHist, file 112.1(D157), 1.

⁷War Diary, Headquarters, 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,237, August 1950, Appendix 4, 3.

irregular.⁸ With so many last minute administrative and technical details to attend to aboard ship, men routinely missed their weekly classes. Moreover, the seas seemed to conspire against the successful conduct of any training whatsoever, as many men were seasick from the time they left Seattle to the time they arrived in Pusan. For example, during their voyage to Korea in October 1951 on board the *USS Marine Alder* the 1 PPCLI encountered a typhoon off the coast of Japan which lasted for three interminable days. At times, the ship actually came out of the water, "causing the props to shake the whole ship."⁹ With most of the battalion incapacitated by sea-sickness very little training was accomplished. Later contingents experienced similar problems. Private W. Hummer of the 3 RCR recalled being "as sick as a fucking dog" and spending much of the voyage above ship "hurling over the side," while Lance-Corporal William Powell of the 3 PPCLI remembered both officers and enlisted men "getting sick over the railing to be any good."¹⁰ Thus, shipboard training, when it took place at all, was usually on a small-scale.

The indoctrination of Korea-bound troops was also

⁸"Soldier's Forum" was subsequently re-named "Platoon Commander's Hour."

⁹"The Papers of B.A.J. Franklin," (hereafter "Franklin Papers"), PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

¹⁰Private W. Hummer, 3 RCR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996; Lance-Corporal William Powell, 3 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996.

bedeviled by a dearth of suitable instructional materials. As late as mid-1951, the 25th Brigade gleaned most of its information on Korea from a series of reports published by the Advanced Headquarters, British Commonwealth Base Korea. These reports, collectively entitled "Notes on Korean Police Action," included general information on Korea, such as population, religion, language, education and government. "Notes" also contained an extremely racist section on Commonwealth "Impressions of the Koreans." The anonymous author of "Impressions" began by noting that, "In the short time of four months over here, one can only get impressions of Koreans, or Gooks as they are commonly known."¹¹ Following this blunt disclaimer, the author delineated what were in his opinion some of the more salient characteristics of Korean civilians. These included a propensity for thievery, a "foul smelling" body odour and "a very perverted sense of humour."¹² The author went on to note that while "the male member of the species [sic] is a poor worker, the female is good."¹³ He wrote, "The women... work from sun up to sun down washing clothes and tilling the fields."¹⁴

The obvious unsuitability of the 25th Brigade's

¹¹"Notes On Korean Police Action, 1 March 1951," DHist, file 81/229, 2.

¹²"Notes On Korean Police Action," 2-3.

¹³"Notes On Korean Police Action," 3.

¹⁴"Notes On Korean Police Action," 3.

shipboard indoctrination program became painfully apparent by the fall of 1951. During the summer, evidence had accrued that at least some Canadian servicemen, particularly those assigned to support duties behind the front line, were "behaving in such a way as to endanger Canadian-Korean relations."¹⁵ Support for this viewpoint was furnished by the six Canadian soldiers who had been court martialled in August and September for perpetrating violent criminal acts against Korean civilians (see Chapter Eleven). Moreover, the reports of Canadian war correspondents in newspapers and on the radio seemed to point to a general disrespect for Korean culture on the part of Canadian servicemen. For example, Canadian Press war correspondent, Bill Boss, reported an incident in which Canadian soldiers "shot down a centuries old 'spirit' tree" that was sacred to local villagers "to enable proper fields of fire" during a training exercise.¹⁶ Similarly, as a correspondent for *Macleans* magazine, Pierre Berton witnessed Koreans being removed from their mud huts at bayonet point so as not to "clutter up" a photograph.¹⁷ Berton also recalled a

¹⁵Lester Pearson to Brooke Claxton, 4 October 1951, "Correspondence ref. Behaviour of Canadian Troops in Korea," DHist, file 112.2(D157).

¹⁶Bill Boss, "PPCLI Engage In Hard Training," *Calgary Herald*, 22 January 1951, 2.

¹⁷"If Koreans Don't Love Us This Is Why: Excerpts of Talk by Pierre Berton of *Macleans*'s Magazine Over CBC Network," no date, NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-84/167, box 5079, file 3415-2, Part 1, "Soldier's Forum," 1.

Canadian soldier who "wanted to empty the magazine of his light machine-gun."¹⁸ He did so into a Korean burial mound.

Another manifestation of Canadian soldiers' cultural insensitivity identified by the war correspondents was their tendency to treat Korean women "as if they were all prostitutes."¹⁹ While prostitution was a tolerated survival strategy for many impoverished women in Korea's male-dominated society, only certain women were permitted to sell their services. Prostitutes were usually identifiable by their "page boy style" and predominantly western style of dress; married Korean women, who did not engage in prostitution, wore traditional Korean clothing "with their hair parted in the middle and tied tightly in a bun at the back."²⁰ Few Canadian soldiers recognized these subtle, but important differences in appearance and social function. Obviously, an attempt to solicit the services of a married woman was an affront to Korean culture, and did little to foment harmonious relations between Canadians and Koreans. However, Pierre Berton cautioned:

let's not blame the soldiers. They've had no training in this business of being an ambassador. Nobody's given them any really thorough training in how to behave in [Korea].... In my mind, this business of teaching men how to behave is getting to be as important as teaching

¹⁸"If Koreans Don't Love Us This Is Why," 1.

¹⁹"If Koreans Don't Love Us This Is Why," 1.

²⁰Private Dave Cyr, 1 PPCLI, cited in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 42.

them first and second stoppages on the Bren gun.²¹

As evidence of tactless Canadian behaviour in the Far East continued to mount, Lester Person wrote a letter to the Brooke Claxton requesting him to look into the matter. Claxton duly instructed the Acting Chief of the General Staff, Major-General H.A. Sparling, to prepare a paper on Canadian attitudes towards Koreans and the suitability of 25th Brigade's pre-deployment indoctrination program. As might be expected, Sparling refuted all accusations of improper behaviour in the 25th Brigade, claiming that "the Canadian soldier is not only friendly towards Koreans, but goes out of his way to help them with food, clothing and medical attention."²² Sparling's paper did, however, hint at the gross ineffectiveness of the Canadian indoctrination program. In the appendix he outlined several measures which had "recently" been implemented to better prepare Canadian soldiers for service on the Korean peninsula. The most important of these was the provision of handbooks and pamphlets on Korea to Canadian units destined for the Far East.

As it turned out, the handbooks were almost always in short supply and of rather dubious value. For example, "A Precis On Korea," which covered topics such as agriculture,

²¹"If Koreans Don't Love Us This Is Why," 2.

²²Sparling to Claxton, 18 October 1951, Correspondence ref. Behaviour of Canadian Troops in Korea, DHist, file 112.1(D157).

transportation and communications, trade and industry, and natural resources was prepared by the Directorate of Military Training and issued to the 25th Brigade on a scale of one per battalion.²³ Eight-hundred reprints of the US Army's "A Pocket Guide to Korea"²⁴ were also issued to the 25th Brigade, but few veterans recall ever having one in their possession.²⁵ To make matters worse, the guide scarcely mentioned the dismal social situation in Korea. However, it did contain hard-to-find information like "swinging used to be exclusively a girl's sport but, because of its danger, has come to be shared by boys as well," "Koreans may have wives and concubines [and] enjoy a good joke or a laugh like the rest of us," and they "produce a strong potato alcohol."²⁶ Tips of this sort obviously did little for the edification of Canadian soldiers. Having said this, the guide did make a half-hearted attempt to familiarize its readers with such things as Korean religious practices, diet and appearance. Even here, however, it

²³"Training 25 CIB In Current Affairs, 18 October 1951," Correspondence ref. Behaviour of Canadian Troops in Korea, DHist, file 112.1(D157).

²⁴The guide was re-printed, complete with Canadian illustrations, by the Department of National Defence in December 1951 under the title "Korea."

²⁵"Training 25 CIB In Current Affairs," DHist, file 112.1(D157). This observation is based on interviews with over fifty veterans of the Korean War.

²⁶"Booklet On Korea," NAC, RG 24, Volume 20,290, file 934.009(D373), 9-10, 29.

lacked useful information, as reflected by the simplistic Chapter titles of "Confucius Says," "Fire-Eaters?" and "They've Fashion Worries, Too."²⁷

Overall, the 25th Brigade's Korean indoctrination program was a dismal failure. While Canadian soldiers were relatively well-informed about the political implications of containing "the Red-Menace" on the Korean peninsula, they knew very little "about the country and people" they were being sent to defend.²⁸ In hindsight, the 25th Brigade's ineffective indoctrination program can largely be attributed to the Canadian Army's limited experience in Asia. The Canadian Army did not deploy to Korea with the benefit of a well-developed institutional memory of service in Asia, as it had of Europe during the Second World War. Even though this collective memory did not include Italy, the Canadians and Italians clearly had far more in common than the Canadians and Koreans ever could have.²⁹ Furthermore, the practice of leaving indoctrination on Korea to the last possible moment, while travelling on the troopships, prevented the effective dissemination of information based on firsthand experience from returned veterans to those en route to the Far East. In any event, the absence of an

²⁷"Booklet On Korea," 1.

²⁸"Kap'yong Remembered: Anecdotes from Korea," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 4.

²⁹This is certainly the opinion of the Korean Veterans interviewed during the 1996 KVA Conference in Calgary.

effective indoctrination program left the door wide open for the Canadians to form their own impressions of Korea; impressions which were based on racist assumptions and fleeting glimpses of Korean society from the back of a truck or from behind the window of a passing troop-train, rather than on sustained contact with the local civilian population.

LIFE ON THE TROOP-SHIPS

In all likelihood, few Canadian soldiers probably worried about their inadequate indoctrination as their troop-ship steamed across the Pacific; at this early stage of their tour there were other concerns of more immediate importance. Chief among them were the condition of their quarters and the quality of their rations.

Troop-ships are notoriously crowded, and the ships of the US Military Sea Transport that carried the Canadians to Korea were no exception. Officers and senior NCOs were normally billeted in relatively comfortable cabins on the upper decks; enlisted men were always quartered in the lower berths. Shipboard discipline dictated that these be kept as clean and orderly as possible. With hundreds of men and their kit crammed into the narrow corridors between the racks of bunks, it was hard enough to move let alone maintain some semblance of military order.

Restrictions on access to shower and laundry facilities made the journey across the Pacific even more uncomfortable, particularly as the Canadians approached the warm, tropical waters off Hawaii. For men sweltering in the over-crowded, claustrophobic troop compartments, the pungent odour of unwashed humanity and vomit from seasick comrades was more than an unpleasant inconvenience, it was a health threat. On the advice of battalion Medical Officers, the Canadians countered the threat by implementing open air laundry parades. Under this arrangement, troops would move to the top deck by platoon, strip, and tie their heavy, woolen battle-dress uniforms to a long line that was weighted at one end. Once all uniforms were securely fastened, the line was tossed overboard and dragged alongside the ship. After approximately thirty minutes the line was reeled in, uniforms reclaimed, and the process began anew.

Other measures implemented to combat the spread of bacteria in the lower berths included the formation of special fatigue parties to swab the heads and the enforcement of the highest standards of personal hygiene. At least one Canadian battalion, the 2 PPCLI, is known to have taken the latter measure to extremes. During its voyage to the Far East the battalion launched "Operation Haircut."³⁰ A group of Patricias with shaved heads aptly

³⁰Miscellaneous file, provided to the author by E.A. Higham (hereafter the Higham Papers).

known as the "cue ball club" were given the responsibility of executing the operation. Armed with hair clippers, the "cue ball club" prowled the troop compartments of the *Private Joe P. Martinez* looking for unwary comrades with full heads of hair. Most submitted willingly to the "cue ball treatment." Those who did not were unceremoniously pinned to the deck and their heads shaved clean. In addition to improving comfort and hygiene, "Operation Haircut" undoubtedly contributed to the maintenance of morale on an otherwise arduous voyage.

Another feature of shipboard life which required some adaptation on the part of Canadian soldiers was the practice of responding to commands and instructions issued over the ship's intercom. "Each message [was] prefixed [by], 'Now hear this....' then the message."³¹ Thus, the announcement ordering the soldiers quartered in compartment E-5 on the *USS Marine Alder* to the "galley"³² would sound like this: "Now Hear This. Compartment Easy-Five, Chow Now."³³

Meals were, in fact, the highlight of most soldiers' days. Served cafeteria style, they usually knocked several hours off each day as the men had to wait in a cue which wound around the ship and down into the lower decks. The

³¹Sapper Jack Hayward, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 43.

³²In army parlance, a kitchen is usually referred to as a "mess."

³³"Franklin Papers," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

food on the American troop-ships was generally good and plentiful,³⁴ although during 2 PPCLI's voyage to Korea many of the men complained that they were constantly hungry. On one occasion, when that old military stand-by, spaghetti and meat sauce, was served, by the time the men at the end of the battalion snake reached the meal counter all that remained were a few pots of plain pasta noodles.³⁵ However, as with any highly coveted commodity, food could be procured from the ship's "underdeck economy." An after hours ham sandwich from the galley cost the hungry Canadians an outrageous five American dollars; for those with more modest tastes, a stale loaf of bread could be had for two American greenbacks.³⁶

Little concern was shown for soldiers' welfare during off-duty hours; when not incapacitated by seasickness many veterans recall having the evenings to themselves. This is surprising given the fact that the Canadians were on their way to an unfamiliar operational theatre. Surely some of their free time would have been better spent brushing-up on weapons drills or first-aid techniques. In any event, the off-duty hours represented a temporary escape from the

³⁴Sapper Jack Hayward, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 43.

³⁵Corporal George Cook, 2 PPCLI, interview, 24 June 1994.

³⁶"2 PPCLI In Korea," PPCLI Archives, box 130-1 to 134-3, file 130(6)-1.

monotony of shipboard routine. For some, the respite presented an opportunity to win back the money lost in lastnight's poker game; for others, it was a time to write letters or to contemplate the immediate future. For most, however, it was a time to smoke and socialize and, if they were lucky, catch a movie on the ship's upper deck after dark. But even movies could become tiresome, especially when the same ones were played over and over again. On the USS *Private Joe Martinez*, for example, *The Boy With the Green Hair*, starring Barbara Hale and Pat O'Brien was shown no fewer than five times.³⁷

To help alleviate the boredom of shipboard life, most Canadian units published daily news bulletins. These included the "Gaffey Gazette" on the USS *Hugh J. Gaffey*, the "Freeman News" on the USS *General Freeman*, and the joint American-Canadian "Eagle Leaf" on the *Private Joe Martinez*. All provided news and sports results from home, a lost and found service, movie, worship and dining schedules, birthday announcements, weather reports, a classified ads service, and a humour column.³⁸ For example, the 11 December 1950 edition of the "Eagle-Leaf" advised its readers that, among other things, today was their sixteenth day at sea, a Canadian bayonet had been found in the Chaplains Office, and

³⁷"The Higham Papers," November-December 1950, in the possession of the author.

³⁸"Walter O. Holt Papers," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

that Lance-Corporal Finn was repairing Ronson cigarette lighters in Compartment 3-B for .25 to .75 cents.³⁹ The edition also ran a cartoon depicting a Canadian soldier doubled over with bare buttocks in front of an angry-looking Medical Officer. The caption read: "I don't care what your Sergeant says, there's no lead in there!" It goes without saying that comic relief of this nature was especially appreciated by men who had spent the better part of two weeks living in close proximity to their senior NCOs.

As their troop-ships steamed across the International Dateline the Canadians were treated to another form of comic relief: the US Navy's Neptune Ceremony. Following a humorous display of dancing, horseplay and singing, participants were presented a "Domain of the Golden Dragon" certificate which read in part:

To all... GREETINGS.... Know ye: Ye that are chit singers, squaw men, opium smokers, ice men, and all-round land lubbers that [name of soldier] having been found worthy to be a numbered dweller of the FAR EAST has been gathered in my fold and duly initiated into the Silent Mysteries of the Far East.... I do hereby command all money lenders, wine sellers, cabaret owners, Geisha managers, Sergeant Majors and Military Police, and all my other subjects to show honour and respect all his wishes whenever he may enter my realm.⁴⁰

Raucous behaviour notwithstanding, for many soldiers the

³⁹The "Eagle-Leaf," 11 December 1950. Copies of the "Eagle-Leaf" were kindly made available to the author by E.A. Higham.

⁴⁰"Domain of the Golden Dragon," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

Neptune Ceremony served to underline their sense of having crossed the Rubicon, that imaginary line "which once crossed betokens irrevocable commitment." From this point on, there would be no turning back. They were now in the "Domain of the Golden Dragon," a mysterious region which contained people and images of which they had only the faintest knowledge.

The Canadians were treated to their first glimpse of the "Domain of the Golden Dragon" when their troop-ships steamed into the port of Yokohama in Japan. All Korea-bound troopships stopped here to take on supplies and, in some instances, American replacements. Battalion commanders typically used the layover to give their troops an opportunity to shake their sea-legs, and take in some of the local attractions. To the chagrin of their officers, the route-marches around Yokohama revealed just how unfit the men had become after twenty-three days at sea.

Depending on their battalion, the Canadians either proceeded directly to Pusan from Yokohama, or boarded a troop train for the ports of Kure or Sasebo in Western Honshu, whence they embarked for Korea.⁴¹ The 1 PPCLI was one of the Canadian battalions to follow the latter itinerary. The unit war diary records the Patricias' first glimpse of Asia:

⁴¹Two companies of the 1 RCR landed at Inchon instead of Pusan.

3 October 1951,

Docked at Yokohama 0940 hrs.... Entraining was handled efficiently.... Faces were glued to the window until darkness. This was our first close-up view of the Orient and the troops were not going to miss a thing.

4 October 1951,

0500 hrs we passed through Osaka; it was a miserable night, the constant rocking of the train making sleep nearly impossible. However, the discomforts of the night were soon forgotten as we passed through such large cities as Kyoto, Kobe, Hiroshima, all of them offering strange and wonderful sights.

5 October 1951,

Embussed at 1600 hrs and were taken to the port Sasebo.... Troops were allotted compartments and boarded [a Japanese] ship.... Officers and Senior NCOs have state rooms; the other personnel are occupying compartments and sleeping on straw mats.⁴²

Now only thirty-six hours out of Pusan the Canadians settled down for the final leg of their journey.

IMPRESSIONS OF KOREA

If the Canadians' initial impression of Japan was generally positive and coloured with an intense curiosity, their initial reaction to Korea hovered between apathy and contempt. According to a Department of National Defence press release, "the first thing to strike the newcomer" to

⁴²War Diary, 1 PPCLI, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,312, 4-6 October 1951.

Korea was the rugged topography.⁴³ With the exception of the Chorwon plain north of Seoul, Korea is a mountainous country. At the time of the Korean War, however, few of the mountains were covered with trees: perpetually short of natural resources, the Japanese had effectively de-forested much of the countryside during their thirty-five years of occupation. As the Canadians approached the waters off Pusan, the vast granite monoliths which ring the city came into view. However, "the realization that they would have to fight over [this type of terrain] spoiled the enjoyment, because it was not easy fighting country."⁴⁴

Nor did the climate particularly appeal to the Canadians. One report characterized it as having "a split personality."⁴⁵ During the summer, monsoon winds off the South China Sea blow across the peninsula, bringing high temperatures and heavy rainfall. During the winter, the pattern is reversed: dry, sub-Arctic winds from Manchuria and Siberia blow down the peninsula, freezing rivers and bringing sub-zero temperatures. In fact, some of the first Canadian soldiers to arrive in December 1950 were shocked to discover just how cold a Korean winter could be. A soldier in the 2 PPCLI recalled, "We thought we were going to a

⁴³"Canada's War in Korea, Article No. 1," no date, DHist, file 81/229, 2.

⁴⁴Wood, *Private War of Jacket Coates*, 92.

⁴⁵"Canada's War in Korea, Article No. 1," no date, DHist, file 81/229, 2.

tropical country. Nobody had heard of Korea or thought of snow and ice. If I thought it to be snow and ice, I would never have gone.⁴⁶

Whether the temperature was blistering hot or bitterly cold, the soldiers of the 25th Brigade had other things to worry about as their ship slipped into Pusan harbour. On arrival, the Canadians packed their fifty-pounds of combat kit and stumbled down the gangplank on legs still reeling from three-weeks at sea. Barely audible above the din of heavy combat boots on wood and the grumbling and cursing of men locked in strenuous physical exertion were the familiar refrains of "If I Knew You Were Coming, I'd A Baked A Cake." This song, performed by the resident US Army band, greeted every Canadian unit to arrive in Pusan and remains an enduring feature of most veterans' initial impressions of Korea.

Two other features that shaped initial Canadian impressions were the smell and abject poverty of Pusan's civilian population. Today, Pusan is a modern, relatively clean, cosmopolitan city; at the time of the Korean War, it was in shambles. The city's Japanese-built infrastructure (where it existed) was in a dilapidated state, and totally incapable of dealing with the hundreds of thousands of civilian refugees who had flocked to Pusan in the aftermath of the bloody battles of 1950. Thousands of homeless and

⁴⁶"Kap'yong Remembered," 4.

despondent civilians, without the bare necessities of life, congregated in the vermin-infested shanty towns which ringed the port. The depth of their misery defies description, crammed as they were into crude shelters constructed of corrugated iron, discarded ration boxes and loose bricks. Cooking was conducted outside over open fires, often only feet away from the communal privy. Where none existed, people simply relieved themselves amid the piles of rubble. Sewage and refuse mixed freely in the gutters which, combined with the powerful (and unfamiliar) smells emanating from several thousand cooking pots, created an odour that assailed the Canadians' nostrils. Veterans often recall that it was possible to smell Pusan several miles out to sea, long before the city came into view. Commenting on Pusan's appalling odour, Brigadier Rockingham reminisced:

The lack of sanitation when a normal population is present is bad enough, but when a place like Pusan has its population increased from 600,000 to 2,000,000 by refugees, you can imagine the result. The stench was so bad that it seemed to slow the motors of the vehicles as we drove through a particularly heavy concentration.⁴⁷

Rockingham was not the only one to be taken aback by the smell of human misery. Lance-Corporal William Powell also remembered Korea as "a really smelly country," while Private Louis McLean recalled, "When I arrived in [Pusan], the smell of human waste was a shock and almost made me puke. I had

⁴⁷Brigadier J.M. Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea, NAC, MG 31 G12, 19.

done enough puking on the [troop-ship] and was really tired of feeling like crap.⁴⁸

As repulsive as Pusan's unmistakable odour was to the Occidental nostrils of Canadian soldiers, most found the pitiful conditions of the refugees the hardest to bear. According to Lance-Corporal John Murray, "When we arrived in Pusan I was terrified about the prospect of getting ashore and meeting the population.... I was not prepared for the dismal conditions of South Korea. I was really depressed after my arrival."⁴⁹ And in Corporal James Wilson's opinion:

If anything sticks out in my mind it was the total destruction and destitution which the [civilian] population, particularly the people of Pusan had to survive in. We were not trained for those conditions, and man I still can't shake the shitty conditions out of my mind.⁵⁰

That both soldiers identified a lack of training as the cause of their emotional difficulties is not surprising, given their inadequate indoctrination in the social aspects of operational service in Korea.

The Canadians were equally unprepared for some of the sights and cultural mores they were to witness as they moved through Pusan and up the Korean peninsula to the front line.

⁴⁸Lance-Corporal William Powell, 2 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996; Private Louis McLean, 2 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁴⁹Lance-Corporal John Murray, 3 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁵⁰Corporal James Wilson, 3 RCR, interview, 24 August 1996.

Shortly after the arrival of the 25th Brigade in Pusan in May 1951, a Canadian vehicle convoy was treated to what Brigadier Rockingham later referred to as "our first experience of the Oriental disregard for human life."⁵¹ As the Canadians made their way from the port to the railway station they witnessed a truck strike and kill a young Korean child. To the Canadians' utter disbelief, the ROK soldier who was driving the truck jumped out of his cab and casually dragged the child by one foot to the side of the road, whereupon he returned to his vehicle. The by-now dismounted Canadians intercepted the hapless driver before he could get back in his truck and proceeded to rough him up. Fearing his soldiers were going to kill the ROK soldier, Rockingham "had to intervene from nearby, and then make a report to the [ROK] Army."⁵² The Brigadier's report, however, fell on deaf ears. Rockingham reminisced that the ROK officials "did not actually say 'so what', but managed to convey that impression."⁵³

Fresh from North America, Rockingham and his men were understandably shocked and disgusted by the seemingly ghastly insouciance of both the offending driver and ROK officialdom. However, what they could not possibly understand was that the combined impact of war and thirty-

⁵¹Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 19.

⁵²Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 20.

⁵³Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 20.

five years of Japanese subjugation had made survival in this unhappy nation precarious to say the least. Had the Canadians been properly indoctrinated before arriving in the Far East they would have recognized the that actions -- or inaction -- of the truck driver and ROK officialdom reflected the mass desensitization to capricious death which is such a feature of life in a war-zone. In no way did this sordid episode reflect a uniquely "Oriental disregard for human life." To the average Canadian soldier in Brigadier Rockingham's convey that day -- and it is with perception which we are dealing -- the callous disregard for a dead child was proof positive of the primitive, and indeed brutal, nature of Korean culture. As the Canadians completed the final leg of their journey to the front line by train, this impression became even more pronounced.

The train ride from Pusan to the battleline north of Seoul took two days and was notoriously uncomfortable, eroding any enthusiasm the Canadians might have had for the passing Korean countryside. There was no heat in winter and, save for the occasional broken window, no air-conditioning in the summer. "The seats were just crude wood benches,"⁵⁴ and men and kit competed for every available space. Tempers were dangerously short as the narrow gauge train rocked from side to side over the rugged Korean terrain. To make matters worse, the ablution facilities

⁵⁴Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, 91.

were horrendous:

the worst was the toilet. It was situated at the end of the coach, a small cubicle with a hole in the floor. No windows, no door, nor rails to hold onto as the train rocked back and forth, no toilet paper, just three narrow walls and a hole in the wooden floor. There was shit everywhere. Layers and layers of it, shit on the floor, shit on the walls and as proof of man's endeavour, shit on the ceiling. We were prisoners on that train... each and every one of us had to use that shit hole at least once.⁵⁵

The little food available on the train -- normally some hard-tack biscuits and jam from the men's ration packs and a canteen full of heavily-chlorinated water -- was scarcely any better. In the event, few Canadians had much of an appetite: the sight (and smell) of Korean farmers, condescendingly referred to as "smiling Sams,"⁵⁶ carrying "honey" buckets of human excreta to fertilize the vast rice paddies which flanked the rail line helped suppress the pangs of hunger.

If the Korean practice of fertilizing crops with human waste served to reinforce the Canadians' sense of technological, and even racial, superiority, so did the indigenous population's housing and appearance. At the time of the Korean War, most rural Koreans still lived in the same mud and brick thatched-roof villages as their

⁵⁵Sapper Jack Hayward, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 47.

⁵⁶"Notes On Korean Police Action," DHist, file 81/229, 3.

ancestors.⁵⁷ The Canadians viewed these humble abodes as quaint anachronisms, although few could understand why they were being sent over ten thousand miles from home to defend them. To a lesser degree, this feeling was directed against the Koreans themselves. Dressed in baggy clothing and often wearing what were considered to be "comic" pointed hats, the average Korean farmer appeared to Canadian eyes like something out of medieval times.⁵⁸ Even the Korean women were considered to be unattractive and dirty,⁵⁹ although as we shall see this did not keep the soldiers of the 25th Brigade out of the bawdy-houses.

The Canadian impression of Korean civilians was not enhanced by the desperate acts of some of the poverty-stricken individuals they encountered at train stations along the way. These could range from innocuous attempts by shoe-shine boys to overcharge their Canadian customers to instances of outright thievery. The latter were never violent, and usually involved the theft of rations or personal effects like blankets and great coats.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, such acts only served to confirm the racist stereotypes proffered in the early indoctrination

⁵⁷"Korea," no date, DHist, file 112.1(D157), 4-5.

⁵⁸Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, 92.

⁵⁹"Notes On Talk Given By Lieutenant-Colonel Stone At AHQ, 5 June 1951," DHist, file 145.2P7013(D6), 6

⁶⁰"Notes On Korean Police Action," DHist, file 81/229, 2.

literature.

In an effort to come to terms with the dismal conditions which confronted them, Canadian officers and men with Second World War experience often commented how primitive and undeveloped Korea was compared to anything they had seen in Europe. It was generally accepted that Korea lacked "even the crude amenities of Sicily or Southern Italy."⁶¹ Following a brief visit to Korea during the summer of 1951, Lieutenant-Colonel D.S.F. Built-Francis of the Adjutant-General's Office wrote that "the terrain, the climate, the time and space factor, the filth and poverty... in Korea... forbid comparison with conditions met during the last war in Europe."⁶² The Adjutant-General's assessment was corroborated by the soldiers themselves. A veteran of the Second World War claimed that he "had seen destruction in Europe late in '44 and '45... but nothing compared to [Korea]... rice paddies fertilized with human waste, no plumbing, the place stank and the food was scarce...."⁶³

The seemingly primitive and brutal nature of Korean society shocked most soldiers, leading some to immediately question the purpose of Canadian involvement in Korea.

⁶¹"Canada's War in Korea, Article No. 1," no date, DHist, file 81/229, 1.

⁶²"Report By Lt.-Col. DSF Built-Francis, AG Rep On AHQ Team, On Visit to Japan and Korea, 2 July - 4 August 1951," DHist, file 112.009(D87), 1.

⁶³Sergeant George Thwaites, "C" Squadron, LDSH, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

Shortly after his arrival in Korea a young soldier informed a Canadian war correspondent that "I suppose this really must be a war for an ideal. There's obviously nothing else to fight for in this god-forsaken country."⁶⁴

The Canadians' scepticism was further exacerbated by the questionable combat record of their Korean allies. It is not the purpose of this work to assess the battlefield performance of the ROK Army in the Korean War; nevertheless, it is important to note that long before the first Canadians reached the front the ROK Army had already gained the reputation as unreliable "bug-out artists."⁶⁵ Though this reputation had first been bestowed on ROK units by the Americans, the Canadians quickly picked up on it after the disintegration of the 6th ROK Division at the Battle of Kap'yong in April 1951. During the battle, the 2 PPCLI had occupied defensive positions overlooking the Kap'yong River Valley in a successful attempt to hold open an escape route for the beleaguered Korean division. As the Canadians made their way up the Kap'yong River Valley they were passed by scores of panic-stricken ROK soldiers fleeing in the opposite direction. The sight did not impress the advancing Canadians, and for the rest of the war the Canadians generally viewed their ROK counterparts as cowards who were more than happy to let others do the fighting for them.

⁶⁴"Canada's War In Korea, Article No. 1," 1.

⁶⁵Hepenstall, *Find The Dragon*, 180.

Koreans were not the only thing on the Canadians' minds as they neared the front line. As their train chugged northward, the villages and farmers that had dotted the rail line gave way to ammunition dumps and military traffic. Now in the rear areas of the battle front, an "atmosphere of tension" hung in the air.⁶⁶ The sense of adventure that had characterized the initial stages of the journey to Korea was replaced by a feeling of foreboding, as the Canadians came to the stark realization that they were now at the "sharp end," a feeling that was reinforced when they detrained and clamoured aboard the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps trucks for the final run to the front. Here, they would remain for twelve interminable months, save for the occasional rotation into divisional reserve and a five day Rest and Recuperation in Japan. Otherwise, the only way out of the front line was on a stretcher or wrapped-up in a blanket.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

The voyage to the front had been long and difficult for the soldiers of the 25th Brigade. Life aboard the US Navy's

⁶⁶Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, 92.

⁶⁷"Body-bags" were not normally used by the Canadians in Korea; instead, fatal casualties were wrapped-up in a waterproof poncho and covered by a standard-issue Army wool blanket for the move to the rear.

troop transports was anything but a picnic; for almost a month the men had to contend with cramped, foul-smelling troop compartments, boredom, sea-sickness and, in one instance, insufficient food. Things did not improve for the Canadians when they disembarked from their "floating prisons" in Pusan harbour.⁶⁸ Insufficiently indoctrinated on the non-combat aspects of service on the Korean peninsula, the vast majority recoiled from the smell, poverty, dirt and cultural mores which confronted them. By the time the Canadians reached the front line, many had formed the impression that Korea was a God-forsaken place, populated by a primitive, and even brutal, people. But like all first impressions, this one would be undergo a metamorphosis once the Canadians found themselves in sustained contact with Koreans. Indeed, in the crucible of combat other variables would emerge which would shape Canadian impressions of, and relations with, the Korean "Other" on the field of battle.

⁶⁸"Franklin Papers," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

CHAPTER FIVE

FRONT LINE CANADIAN-KOREAN RELATIONS

Although Canadian infantrymen seldom saw civilians in the front line, they regularly encountered "Other" Koreans.¹ During their Far Eastern tours the soldiers of the 25th Brigade were in almost continual contact with the men of the Korean Service Corps, an indigenous service organization that provided porters and labourers to each front line unit. Later in the war, the soldiers of the third battalions also served alongside Korean Augmentation troops in combat. Canadian battlefield relations with these two distinct groups of Korean servicemen was characterized by an ambivalence that transcended the immediate concerns of race. While the Canadians generally respected the men of the KSC, the Korean Augmentation troops were resented and poorly treated. The explanation for these contradictory battlefield perceptions of, and relations with, the Korean "Other" is found in the Canadian soldier's sense of comradeship and group cohesion. So long as the Koreans contributed to the maintenance and support of the Canadian group, they were viewed in a positive light and generally treated as co-equals. When they were perceived to threaten the group they encountered intense hostility and even

¹"Canada's War In Korea, Article No. 1," no date, DHist, file 81/229, 2; Lance-Corporal John Murray, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

harsher treatment.

GROUP COHESION

One of the most important insights to emerge out of Richard Holmes' exceptional book *Firing Line* was the importance of comradeship, and, by extension, small-group cohesion, to the combat soldier. While recognizing the role played by abstract ideals such as patriotism and religion in certain historical contexts, he argued forcefully that neither could account for what he termed "the valour of simple men."² He wrote:

to the [soldier] crouched behind a hummock of peat and heather while bullets snap over his head... neither ideology nor religion give much incentive... to get up and sprint for the next cover.... For the key to what makes men fight - not enlist, not cope, but fight - we must look hard at military groups and the bonds that link men within them.³

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, the entire process of cementing the men of the 25th Brigade together into small groups began in basic training. Harsh, collective punishments for individual transgressions and relentless drilling were not simply anachronistic hangovers from an earlier age; from the outset, such practices were utilized to draw recruits closer together under conditions of intense, but controlled, hardship. The need for strong

²Holmes, *Firing Line*, 291.

³Ibid.

group cohesion did not end with basic training, although admittedly, the methods utilized to foment it changed somewhat. In fact, group cohesion assumed a new importance once the soldier was posted to an infantry section within his respective regiment. Although a member of the "regimental family," the Canadian soldier's strongest loyalties were to his section mates: the "primary group of up to ten"⁴ men with whom he trained, bunked, whored and drank on a daily basis. The Army has long recognized that soldiers who socialize together fight together, and this precept was not lost in the messes and brothels frequented by the men of the 25th Brigade.

In Korea, the bonds of comradeship, and the small-group cohesion which stems from it, became even more pronounced. Commenting on the intensification of comradeship in a battlefield context, a Second World War British Medical Officer wrote:

The sense of separation from home, from its security and comforting permanence and its familiar reassurance of one's personal status, is a permanent stress. A camaraderie is the only human recompense for a threatening sense of importance in the face of death and the waywardness of elemental forces and the decisions of the mighty who use soldiers like pawns.⁵

Isolated on their lonely hill-top positions, fighting a war that was not even officially recognized as such and faced

⁴Holmes, *Firing Line*, 293.

⁵Lieutenant-Colonel T.F. Main, quoted in Ellis, *The Sharp End of War*, 340.

with the daily threat of death or mutilation, Canadian soldiers turned inwards to their immediate comrades to the exclusion of almost everything else. Mail and parcels from home were shared amongst the group, and food was prepared communally whenever possible.⁶ All that mattered to the individual soldier was the continued survival and well-being of his primary group. S.L.A. "Slam" Marshall argued in his seminal *Men Against Fire* that soldiers in the line of fire do not even think of themselves as subordinate members of a formal military organization, but as more or less equals within a very small and exclusive group. In combat, the members of the group fight for their personal survival, which, as John Keegan noted, they "will recognize to be bound up with group survival."⁷ At the same time, group members fight to avoid "incurring by cowardly conduct the group's contempt."⁸ This is the essence of the combat soldier's existence, and it goes without saying that any threat -- be it real or imagined, friend or foe -- to his group will be met with extreme hostility.

This perilously brief overview of the importance of the primary group to the combat soldier in no way does justice to the complexity of the subject. Nevertheless, it is included here to give the reader some appreciation of the

⁶Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 89-90.

⁷Keegan, *Face of Battle*, 51.

⁸Ibid.

nature of small-group dynamics on the battlefield. For the Canadians' conflicting battlefield perceptions of, and relations with, the Korean Service Corps (KSC) and the Korean Augmentation Troops, Commonwealth (KATCOM), were largely shaped by their relationship vis a vis the Canadian primary group.

THE "RICE-BURNERS"

As the Canadians moved up through the echelons to the front line, they could not help but notice the large numbers of KSC workers unloading trucks, hauling equipment and digging latrines. Formed as "a quasi-military organization on 4 July 1950," the KSC "provide[d] workers to serve combat support missions, supply munitions to outlying units, evacuate wounded and build defensive positions and supply routes."⁹ Although technically part of the ROK Army, the men of the KSC did not normally carry weapons nor did they wear the standard ROK combat uniform.¹⁰ In its place, they wore a padded blue jacket and baggy khaki trousers. Despite their unwarlike appearance, the men of the KSC were

⁹"The Value of the Korean Service Corps, 24 March 1971," Eighth US Army Historical Office, Yongsan Garrison, Seoul, Republic of South Korea (hereafter Eighth Army Historical Office, Yongsan), file 700.016, 1.

¹⁰"1 Commonwealth Division Standing OP INSTR No. 21 - Korean Service Corps, 17 October 1951," Strippings of 25th CIB, 1951-1952, DHist, file 410B25.009(D2), 1.

commanded by their own officers and NCOs, and organized along military lines: each KSC regiment consisted of three battalions of four companies each. In October 1951, the Canadians were officially assigned one battalion of KSC personnel from the 120th regiment. This battalion was employed by the 25th Brigade for the rest of the war, on a scale of one KSC company per Canadian infantry battalion;¹¹ the remaining company was divided between Brigade Headquarters and the Engineer Squadron.¹²

Canadian soldiers and Korean workers served together long before the official allocation of a KSC battalion to the 25th Brigade in October 1951. Shortly after the 2 PPCLI took to the field in February of that year, the battalion was allocated several dozen Korean porters to assist in packing food, water, ammunition and the other sundry supplies which an infantry unit requires in the field. As the Koreans were not yet officially part of the KSC -- most would be integrated into the Corps within the year -- but rather locally "recruited" labourers, they were organized into a company under the command of the Battalion Adjutant.

¹¹There were approximately 300 men in a KSC company.

¹²"HQ Instruction No. 18, 19 October 1951 - Civil Labour," Miscellaneous File Strippings of the 25th CIB, 1951-1952, DHist, file 410B25.009(D2), 1. Within a Canadian infantry battalion, twenty-five KSC personnel were normally allocated to each company, with the remaining 240 "forming a labour pool under the RSM." See "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Bingham, 1 RCR, 28 March 1953," DHist, file 410B25.013(D33), 1.

Initially known as "G" Company, which, according to the 2 PPCLI's Japanese-Canadian war diarist, stood for "Gook," the Korean porters quickly became known as the "rice-burners," in reference to their dietary staple.¹³

There was, however, another reason for the shift in terminology. At this time, the war in Korea had not yet bogged down into a static, attritional affair. During the day, the Canadians advanced on a north-south axis along the valley floors and occupied hilltop defensive positions for the night. The absence of serviceable roads dictated that all supplies had to be man-packed up the steep, and at times treacherous, slopes which led to these positions. Imbued with incredible stamina and intense physical strength, each Korean porter carried a load in excess of twenty-five kilograms on a traditional Korean backpack known as an A-frame. An A-frame "consist[ed] of three poles lashed together to form a crude triangle with shoulder straps of roughly-woven straw."¹⁴ Cargo such as ammunition crates, water-cans and "hayboxes" -- insulated metal containers used to transport food prepared in the company kitchens -- was simply lashed onto these frames, and the Korean porters did the rest. The battalion war diary recorded:

¹³War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 23 February 1951. "Gook" was a derivative of the Korean word *han-guk*, which meant Korean person.

¹⁴Les Peate, "No Pay - No Uniforms - No Glory: A Salute to the 'Rice-Burners,'" *Esprit de Corps*, (Volume IV), No. 5, 2.

[Korean] supply trains continued to arrive in the battalion area until late at night... due to a nearly ten mile cross-country endurance test in the course of which they crossed three 300 metre passes and climbed to 900 metre ridge lines through snow and ice.¹⁵

Watching the porters clamour up the narrow, ice-covered mountain tracks under their back-breaking loads, the Canadians could not help but be impressed. Corporal Earl Richardson recalled that the KSC "were something to see with the big loads they carried. They climbed those hills at a steady clip and seldom rested. Some of them only had one eye or arm. They were a cheerful people and worked long hours...."¹⁶

Though we today might find the term "rice-burner" offensive and laced with racism, Patricia soldiers used the term out of respect for the indefatigable travails of their Korean porters.¹⁷ Hence the shift in terminology. The men who served in Korea were products of Second World War Canadian society; certainly from their point of view, "rice-burner" was an improvement over the term it supplanted. Indeed, an official (and decidedly racist) Canadian report ruefully commented in mid-1951 that "the men of the [Korean] labour battalions [are now referred to] as 'the rice-

¹⁵War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 28-29 March 1951.

¹⁶Corporal Earl Richardson, 1/3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 154-155.

¹⁷Peacock, *Kim-Chi, Asahi and Rum*, 76.

burners,' the term 'gook' having gone out of fashion."¹⁸

With the occupation of static defensive positions along the *Jamestown* line in late-1951, the KSC assumed an increased importance: hence the official allocation of a KSC battalion to the 25th Brigade in October. Where previously they had been used almost exclusively as porters, they now found themselves performing a myriad of tasks for the Canadians. They constructed and repaired trenches, filled the critical link in the medical evacuation chain by acting as stretcher bearers between the forward fighting positions and the jeep-heads on the reverse slopes of the Canadian positions, unloaded supply trucks, and, of course, kept the front line troops supplied with the combat soldier's holy triad of ammunition, water and food.

Given their close proximity to the firing line, it was inevitable that members of the KSC would periodically become casualties. As was the case with the Canadians, most KSC casualties were caused by routine enemy artillery harassment. Chinese artillery often fired around mealtimes, and the Korean porters carrying the hayboxes up to the hungry Canadian riflemen manning the forward defensive positions were frequently caught in the midst of this fire.¹⁹ On other occasions, such as the Chinese attack on

¹⁸"Canada's War in Korea, Article No. 1," 2.

¹⁹War Diary, "E" Company, 1 RCR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,338, 31 October 1952.

Hill 355 in October 1952, members of the KSC were killed bringing ammunition up to the Canadian fighting trenches.²⁰ The unit war diary recorded the wounding of a KSC man just before the attack: "Shelling and mortaring continued throughout the day and one casualty was sustained, a Korean labourer. It has made it rather uncomfortable."²¹

The almost daily interaction between Canadian soldiers and the men of the KSC gave rise to a form of rudimentary front line pidgin.²² The most common expressions included "Hava Yes" and "Hava No" for "yes" and "no," "Idawa" for "come here," "tok son" for "lots," "Chop Chop" for food, and "Number One" for the best.²³ Thus, if a Canadian soldier wanted to ask a KSC porter if the evening's rations had been brought forward, he might have said: "Idawa boy-san, hava yes number one chop chop?" The KSC porters also used front line pidgin to communicate their wishes and thoughts to the Canadians. Lieutenant Bob Peacock reminisced that "One of our corporals in B Company was a native western Indian from the Blackfoot tribe and was called Corporal 'Same Same' by the Koreans. They would point to him, and then to

²⁰"Interview, Lieutenant-Colonel Bingham," 1.

²¹War Diary, "E" Company, 1 RCR, 19 October 1952.

²²Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 76.

²³Ibid.; "Korea War-Born Vocabulary Vigorous - Would Amaze Kipling," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 11 December 1951, 28.

themselves, and say, 'You, me, Same Same!'"²⁴

When not on duty, the men of the KSC were quartered in canvass cantonments just behind the front line, but well within range of enemy indirect artillery fire. Here, they enjoyed a vibrant social life, frequently imbibing "Kickapoo Joy Juice" -- a "foul tasting, but potent brew" produced on stills fashioned out of scrap trench stores.²⁵ Not surprisingly, the KSC received frequent visits from the Canadians. Cigarettes and food (usually C-ration tins of fruit cocktail which were popular with the KSC)²⁶ were the standard medium of exchange, although the thirsty Canadians might also pay cash for a jug of the Korean "moonshine."

Profits earned from the sale of "Kickapoo Joy Juice" were not the only source of hard currency for the men of the KSC. They were paid on a monthly basis, in Korean currency, out of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces account in Japan.²⁷ A Private in the KSC earned only 3,000 Korean WON per month, about seventy-five cents Canadian,²⁸ leading one

²⁴Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 76.

²⁵Peate, "No Pay - No Uniforms - No Glory," 29. The title of this article is misleading for the KSC were paid -- albeit a paltry sum -- for the work they performed for the Canadians.

²⁶Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 90.

²⁷The BCOF, in turn, billed the Canadian government for the cost of KSC services rendered to the 25th CIB.

²⁸Values are expressed in 1951 US dollars. A Sergeant in the KSC received double this amount.

officer to comment that "[KSC] labour was dirt cheap."²⁹

While this was undoubtedly true, the wages of the KSC were significantly higher than those paid to the KATCOMs by the ROK government. As we shall see, the pay differential between the two formations would lead to problems once the KATCOMs took to the field.

By performing essential battlefield support tasks, albeit for a mere pittance, the men of KSC made an important contribution "to the administration and establishment of the [Canadian infantry] battalion in [the] defence."³⁰ The 3 RCR's Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell reported:

It would be a hell of a job to defend these hills without [the KSC]. Because of the work they do by digging and bringing up supplies, almost every fighting man in the battalion is left free to fight. If the KSC were not here the size of the battalion's frontage would have to be reduced by at least 20%.³¹

The enlisted men of the 25th Brigade also recognized the importance of the KSC. Korean veteran and author Robert Hepenstall called the KSC the "unsung heroes of the Korean War."³² Countless other veterans have echoed Hepenstall's assessment of the KSC. Private Louis Vincent recalled that

²⁹Miscellaneous File Strippings of the 25th CIB, 1951 - 1952, DHist, file 410B25.009(D2).

³⁰"Summary of Experience - 3 R22eR," 10.

³¹"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9. The Commanding Officer of 1 RCR also "spoke very highly of the work of the KSC." See "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Bingham," 2.

³²Hepenstall, *Find The Dragon*, 132.

the KSC personnel attached to "our units made us realize the spirit and enthusiasm of the people and what they were fighting for," while Corporal James Wilson admired the KSC "because they had the will to survive in adversity and smile."³³ And according to Sergeant Ken Blair:

the KSC... were good workers, and no matter what job you gave them, they would eventually get it done.... the Canadians treated them as equals more or less. The average Canadian soldier in Korea was well aware that he was a peasant, the same as the Korean workers.... A strange bond developed between the two races.³⁴

All this is not to say that some Canadian servicemen did not view the KSC through the lens of racism.³⁵ For some soldiers, their initial impression of Korea and its people was lasting, and their blinkered views were applied with equal vigour to the men of the KSC. For example, a Canadian veteran has recently commented on the alleged brutality of KSC discipline and the frequent use of summary execution for even minor offenses.³⁶ Another veteran, perhaps recalling the 1st Commonwealth Division order prohibiting KSC

³³Private Louis Vincent McLean, 2 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996; Corporal R. James Wilson, Royal Canadian Signals, interview, 24 August 1996.

³⁴Sergeant Ken Blair, 59th Field Squadron, RCE, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 181-182.

³⁵The available evidence indicates that this was especially the case with some French-Canadian officers in the R22eR. See "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin," 6.

³⁶Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

personnel in front line fighting positions after dark, has questioned the loyalty of some KSC personnel.³⁷ But overall, the available documentary and oral evidence strongly suggests that most Canadian soldiers held a tremendous amount of respect for their allies in the KSC and treated them accordingly.

On the other side of the fence, the handful of KSC veterans who were interviewed during the preparation of this work have nothing but praise for their treatment at the hands of the Canadians. Choi In Wa, a KSC porter who served with the PPCLI recalled that the Canadians were always happy to see him when he arrived with food and ammunition. "The Canadians would give me presents," he said, "which I would give to my mother. My family was very poor and the presents [normally food and cigarettes] helped a great deal."³⁸

THE KATCOMs

It would be convenient to end the forgoing analysis with the conclusion that, on the whole, the soldiers of the 25th Brigade viewed their Korean allies in a positive light, and treated them with the dignity and respect of an esteemed battlefield ally. In all probability, this would have been

³⁷See Peate, "No Pay - No Uniforms - No Glory," 29.

³⁸Choi In Wa, KSC, interview, Naech'on, Republic of South Korea, 10 October 1997.

the case had it not been for the KATCOMs. The British Official Historian has recently suggested that despite "some reservations the [KATCOMs] were wholly accepted" in the 25th Brigade.³⁹ This, clearly, was not the case. While the Canadians generally respected, if not admired, the KSC they despised and resented the KATCOMs. Unlike the KSC which provided essential battlefield support for the 25th Brigade, and so contributed to the maintenance and identity of the Canadian primary group, the KATCOMs were officially integrated into these groups as *de facto* Commonwealth soldiers to bolster combat strength.⁴⁰ Predictably, the Canadian riflemen forced to serve with the KATCOMs viewed them as interlopers at best, and dangerous battlefield liabilities at worst. Accordingly, their treatment by the Canadians was characterized by an intense hostility which could, at times, lead to battlefield practices of extreme heartlessness.

The origins of the KATCOM program can be traced back to August 1950. At this time, the US Army, desperately short of replacements, initiated a scheme whereby surplus ROK personnel were integrated into understrength American field

³⁹Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War: Volume II, An Honourable Discharge* (London: HMSO, 1995), 375.

⁴⁰"Orders, Instructions, and Reports On Organization and Administration of KATCOM In 25th CIB, February 1953 to August 1954," DHist, file 410B25.019(D267).

units.⁴¹ Known as the Korean Augmentation to the US Army, or KATUSA, the program had provided the understrength Eighth Army with several thousand replacements by the time of the Inch'on landings.

From the outset, the KATUSA program was bedeviled by problems. Very few of the KATUSA replacements could understand a word of English, and many had never fired a rifle before. To complicate matters even further, the US Army did not possess sufficient quantities of small-sized clothing to outfit the KATUSAs, and it was found that the standard issue American infantry rifle was too long and bulky for the average Korean to use effectively. Finally, there were major differences in culture, sanitary habits and diet between the KATUSAs and their American hosts. In spite of these obstacles, the program proceeded as planned: by war's end over 23,000 KATUSAs were serving in American combat units.⁴²

Despite the Americans' early integration of Korean troops into their order of battle, it was not until July 1952 that the units of the Commonwealth Division considered accepting "a certain number of basically trained Koreans for

⁴¹David Curtis Skaggs, "The KATUSA Experiments: The Integration of Korean Nationals Into the US Army, 1950-1965," *Military Affairs* (April 1974), 53.

⁴²Ibid.

service with the infantry."⁴³ The proposal to integrate Korean soldiers into Commonwealth fighting units was in line with the overall Canadian policy "to support any action which would enhance the military capabilities of the South Koreans and assist them to defend their own country."⁴⁴

Moreover, "from the political point of view":

[the proposal to integrate Korean troops] might also have a beneficial effect, indirectly, in our relations within the Commonwealth -- particularly with such countries as India and Pakistan -- by showing that the 'white' members of the Commonwealth are prepared to operate with Asian troops on the basis of equality.⁴⁵

In light of these considerations, the Canadian government quickly approved the integration scheme in principle, although it took several months before it was actually implemented while the various Commonwealth governments conferred on the matter. In the meantime, defence planners in Ottawa voiced concern about the practicality, and indeed desirability, of attaching Korean troops to Canadian fighting units. As the Canadian Official Historian noted, "such a proposal, coming at a time when an Armistice seemed to be a distinct possibility," seemed to present defence

⁴³Telegram, G 343, Brigadier Bogert to the Canadian General Staff, 20 July 1952, cited in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 220.

⁴⁴"Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, 10 November 1952," Personnel Employment - General - Korean Army (KATCOM), July 1952 to June 1953, DHist, file 111.41(D14), 1.

⁴⁵Memorandum for Cabinet Defence Committee, 10 November 1952, 1-2.

planners with "more difficulties than solutions."⁴⁶ Chief among them were the problems associated with equipping, administering, immunizing and disciplining foreign nationals assigned to Canadian units.⁴⁷

Not to be discouraged, the commander of the 25th Brigade and the integration scheme's leading proponent, Brigadier M.P. Bogert,⁴⁸ rebuffed his critics by stating that the Korean soldiers would not be issued with a complete set of Canadian kit, that they would eat the same food as the Canadians and that they would "re-examine[d] and inoculate[d] where necessary," to prevent the spread of "communicable diseases."⁴⁹ In so far as discipline was concerned, Bogert claimed that there was "no problem." "From experience in American Divisions," he wrote, the "threat of being sent back... to the ROK Army for disciplining... has been found to be good cure [sic]."⁵⁰ Finally, he assured the sceptics at Defence Headquarters

⁴⁶Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 220.

⁴⁷Appendix 'A' to HQS 2715-151/25(178), 13 August 1952, Personnel Employment - General - Korean Army (KATCOM), July 1952 to June 1953, DHist, file 111.41(D14), 1-2.

⁴⁸Brigadier Bogert replaced Brigadier Rockingham as commander of the 25th CIB in April 1952.

⁴⁹Appendix 'B' to HQS 2715-151/25(178), 13 August 1952," 1.

⁵⁰Appendix 'B' to HQS 2715-151/25(178), 13 August 1952, 1.

that "Koreans have considerable aptitude as soldiers."⁵¹

Bogert's optimism carried the day in Canadian military and diplomatic circles.⁵² The Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Simonds, appears to have been particularly impressed with Bogert's handling of the issue, claiming -- erroneously as it turned out -- that:

The process will be a gradual one and will develop from the integration of fully trained sections to the formation of Korean platoons and companies under their own officers and eventually, the substitution of a South Korean battalion for one of the Canadian battalions of the brigade.⁵³

When official approval for the integration of Korean soldiers into the Commonwealth Division was received in early 1953, Bogert's Headquarters commenced drafting the terms of reference which would govern the integration of the KATCOMs into the 25th Brigade. One-hundred KATCOMs were to be assigned to each Canadian infantry unit on a scale of three per section.⁵⁴ The Canadians were to be responsible for arming, equipping and feeding the KATCOMs, although as

⁵¹Appendix 'A' to HQS 2715-151/25(178), 13 August 1952, 2.

⁵²"Proposed Integration of South Korean Personnel in the Commonwealth Division, Korea," Department of External Affairs, Aide Memoire, 17 November 1952, Personnel Employment - General - Korean Army (KATCOM), July 1952 to June 1953, 1.

⁵³"Integration of South Koreans in 25th CIB," Extract From Minutes of CGS Conference No. 145, 26 November 1952, Personnel Employment - General - Korean Army (KATCOM), July 1952 to June 1953, 1.

⁵⁴Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 221.

Korean nationals, the KATCOMs would be paid by the ROK government.⁵⁵

The first KATCOMs arrived at their host units towards the end of March 1953. It must have been a horribly disheartening experience for these young Korean soldiers as they made their way up through the echelons to join their respective rifle companies. Inadequately trained, unable to understand English and unversed in Canadian cultural mores, these poor souls were expected to become instant members of what is arguably the most exclusive club on earth: the front line infantry rifle section.

History has shown that individual replacements have always had a difficult time being accepted by the men in their section, particularly when the group has served together for an extended period.⁵⁶ That the replacements or augmentation troops might speak a different language or be subject to a different code of discipline only served to make their acceptance into the group even more unlikely; but

⁵⁵"The Administration of 'KATCOM' Troops, 12 May 1953," Correspondence, Reports and Instructions For Integration and Administration of Korean Augmentation Troops into 1st Commonwealth Division, February 1953 to August 1954, DHist, file 410B25.019(D245), 1.

⁵⁶It is interesting to note that all of the Active Force first battalions posted to Korea experienced problems with cohesion in sections that contained battle-hardened, ex-second battalion personnel. One report noted that "there was a tendency to look down on the newly arrived [first battalion] personnel." See, for example, "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel L.F. Trudeau," 2, and "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Bingham," 1.

it does not change the fact that the plight of the combat replacement is tenuous at best. In his remarkable study of the allied fighting man in the Second World War, John Ellis described the unenviable experience of the front line infantry replacement. Fresh from a holding unit and often improperly trained, the replacement was thrown into combat in the company of men who could not even bother to learn his name.⁵⁷ As an outsider, the replacement's life was not worth as much as a veteran's. This, combined with his "often infuriating ignorance, sometimes tempted the veterans and their officers to use them almost as cannon fodder."⁵⁸

And cannon fodder the KATCOMs quickly became. Though they were supposedly "basically trained" when they joined their host units, experience showed that this was rarely the case. A post-war Brigade Headquarters report concluded that the majority of KATCOMs were "useless," and "more of a handicap to [the Brigade] than a help."⁵⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel J.G. Poulin of the 3 R22eR explained why:

During shell fire, the KATCOM cower in their trenches and are undependable. On patrol they are unreliable. None of the company commanders like the KATCOM. They take them because they are ordered to....⁶⁰

Another report noted that the KATCOMs almost always fell

⁵⁷Ellis, *The Sharp End of War*, 336.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹"Summary of Experiences - 3 R22eR," 10.

⁶⁰"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin," 5.

asleep as soon as it became dark, violating the infantryman's adage of "stay alert and stay alive."⁶¹ The 3 PPCLI's Lieutenant Chris Snider recalled:

I was on a night patrol and part way through the night was alarmed to hear loud snoring. It was a KATCOM who had fallen asleep. He was awakened and quietly warned to stay awake. The next day, back in the platoon area, I was told by my NCOs that this had not been the first time this particular individual had fallen asleep.⁶²

As might be expected, very few Canadians relished the idea of going on patrol or occupying defensive positions with the KATCOMs. This was especially true of the KATCOM's Canadian "buddies": the three soldiers in each section who were ordered to keep an eye on the seemingly unreliable and unpredictable KATCOMs. At the same time, these soldiers were to rely on the KATCOMs to watch their backs in a fire fight. How the KATCOMs and their Canadian "buddies" were expected to have faith in one another in a fire fight when they could not even speak to one another at the best of times remains a mystery.

In any event, the complete lack of faith in the KATCOMs' battlefield reliability left their Canadian "buddies," and by extension the entire section, with two choices: on the one hand, they could attempt to train the

⁶¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 11; David Hackworth, *About Face* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 635.

⁶²Lieutenant Chris Snider, 3 PPCLI, quoted in John Gardham, *Korea Volunteer: An Oral History From Those Who Were There* (Burnstown: General Store Publishing, 1994), 180.

KATCOMs. However, the communication barrier -- front line pidgin was hardly up to the task of explaining how to set the fuse on a hand-grenade -- not to mention the absence of suitable training areas in the front line, hampered the successful conduct of useful, realistic training. At best, the KATCOMs' might be given "a few rudimentary lessons on their personal weapons, and then they were assimilated into trench warfare, which meant going on patrol at night."⁶³ Obviously, such training was far from satisfactory, and did little to increase the confidence of either party. On the other hand, the KATCOMs could simply be abandoned by their "buddies" and left to fend for themselves. On patrol, this meant they were positioned in the most vulnerable places in the formation, either at the very front or the very back.⁶⁴ While the man "walking point" found himself performing the role of a human mine and ambush detector (see Chapter Seven), the man in rear was a walking Prisoner of War (POW) in the making. Though it is impossible to know with any certainty the extent to which this form of patrol stacking occurred, circumstantial evidence indicates that it happened regularly.⁶⁵ Moreover, the apparent certainty of a truce agreement being reached in Korea after May 1953 would have

⁶³Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 180.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Several Korean veterans in the Third Battalions have disclosed, in strict confidence, that patrol stacking was quite common.

made this practice seem all the more desirable, at least from the Canadian perspective.

Unlike the combat replacement in other wartime contexts, the KATCOM soldier faced the additional hurdles of culture and nationality. An NCO recalled:

[The KATCOM's] first meal after arriving in our unit was breakfast; here they were in the line up, with all this good food, and not a clue as to what was what. Our troops really put it to them. They showed them how to put pepper in their oatmeal, peanut butter and salt in their coffee. There were lots of stomach complaints....⁶⁶

In addition to suffering gastronomical discomfort at the hands of their Canadian tormentors, the KATCOMs also had reason to feel ill over their pay or, more precisely, the lack thereof. As noted earlier, the KSC were paid, albeit indirectly, by the Canadian government; the KATCOMs, on the other hand, were paid by the ROK government. Compared to their compatriots in the KSC, the KATCOMs were poorly paid indeed: while a private in the KSC earned 3,000 WON per month, or approximately seventy-five cents, a KATCOM private earned only 30 WON, or *less than one cent per month!*⁶⁷ A Canadian private serving alongside a KATCOM, meanwhile, earned a whopping \$47 per month. Not surprisingly, the

⁶⁶Corporal Earl Richardson, 1/3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 181.

⁶⁷"Administrative Order No. 9 - Method of Paying KATCOM Troops, 12 May 1953," Correspondence, Reports and Instructions for Integration and Administration of Korean Augmentation Troops Into 1st Commonwealth Division, February 1953 to August 1954, DHist, file 410B25.019(D245), 2.

disparities in pay created problems.⁶⁸ The KATCOMs resented the fact that they were paid less than their KSC compatriots; in their opinion, serving in a front line combat unit certainly entitled them to equal, if not greater pay, than the KSC porters. Similarly, it was difficult for the KATCOMs not to feel cheated when the other soldiers in their section were earning over 4700 percent more than they were for performing the same duties. There is also some evidence to suggest that the KATCOMs' lack of money may have undermined their acceptance into "the group" as it were.⁶⁹ There is a tradition in the Canadian Army that the "new guys" buy the beer.⁷⁰ Beer was readily available in the front line, and there were no prohibitions on its consumption when the men were not on duty. Thus, to the hard-drinking soldiers of the 25th Brigade, the KATCOMs' inability to spring for a crate of beer may have been construed as a sign of anti-social behaviour.

Another bone of contention between the Canadians and the KATCOMs was discipline. As the ROK Army was responsible for disciplining the KATCOMs, they were not subject to the

⁶⁸"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9.

⁶⁹See the US Army studies cited in Skaggs, "The KATUSA Experiment," 57.

⁷⁰James Davis, *The Sharp End: A Canadian Soldier's Story* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1997), 207.

Canadian code of service discipline.⁷¹ This meant that KATCOM troops could not be disciplined in the same manner as Canadian troops. Although this was not a major problem when serious breaches of discipline were involved, in which case the KATCOM was handed over to ROK authorities for punishment, the same cannot be said for minor offenses. The distances involved, not to mention the impracticality, of pulling a KATCOM out of the line each time he committed a minor offence, gave rise to a disciplinary double standard in the sections in which they served. While a Canadian soldier might be fined or assigned extra duties for losing an item of kit or for having a dirty rifle, a KATCOM could not. Thus, according to an official report published shortly after the war, "there [was] little that [could] be done" when a KATCOM committed a "minor offence."⁷² Canadian soldiers were understandably annoyed when a KATCOM went unpunished, while the same transgression committed by one of their number could result in a fine or, more seriously, a forfeiture of R&R. In such instances, and they were by no means rare, justice was usually served after dark, by a

⁷¹"KATCOMS: A Brief On the Situation for Commander, 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 14 May 1954," Orders, Instructions and Reports On Organization and Administration of KATCOM in 25th CIB, February 1953 to August 1954, DHist, file 410B25.019(D267), 3.

⁷²"KATCOMs: A Brief On the Situation for Commander, 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade," 3.

clenched fist or the heavy sole of a Canadian combat boot.⁷³

The lack of beer and uneven discipline was not the only thing on the Canadians' minds as the KATCOMs settled in. Some of the Canadians, particularly the ones who shared bunkers with the KATCOMs, were also troubled by their Korean counterpart's mannerisms and sanitary habits. A young Bren gunner in the 3 PPCLI remembered the way the section split into two as soon as meals were served. "The KATCOM's," he remembered, "would find a quiet corner of trench and squat on their haunches and just grin at you. So much for comradeship."⁷⁴ Another common Canadian complaint centred on the KATCOM's dietary staple of kim-chi. Though they were fed Canadian rations, most KATCOMs kept a small supply of their own food, a wise precaution given the behaviour of some of the Canadians in mess lines. Made from fermented cabbage, hot peppers and garlic, kim-chi exuded a heavy odour that, in the close confines of a front line bunker, most Canadians found revolting. Indeed, the Americans often referred to the KATUSAs as "those damned kim-chi eaters."⁷⁵ A final complaint centred on the KATCOM habits of constantly spitting and standing on latrine seats.⁷⁶ Such fundamental

⁷³Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁷⁴Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁷⁵Skaggs, "The KATUSA Experiment," 56.

⁷⁶Ibid.

differences in mannerisms and sanitary habits did little to promote cohesion and comradeship between the Canadians and the KATCOMs.

The friction generated by differences in pay, discipline and culture were not, alas, the primary cause of the Canadians' hostility towards the KATCOMs. Rather, these differences, together with the language and training difficulties, combined to ensure that the KATCOMs remained in effect replacements for the duration of their service. Treated with hostility from the outset by virtue of the threat they imposed to the survival of the Canadian primary group, the KATCOMs were never able to transcend their "new guy" or "outsider" status as any other replacement might; that is, of course, if he survived his baptism of fire.

The KATCOM program did not end when the shooting finally stopped in Korea on 27 July 1953, but the cease-fire did pave the way for a certain amount of reflection about its relative advantages and disadvantages. Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell spoke for many in the Canadian Brigade when he concluded that the KATCOMs "remain[ed] a separate element in what was once a homogenous body,"⁷⁷ while 3 R22eR's Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin opined that KATCOMS "think and act quite differently to Canadians. You can't integrate them and expect them to be Canadians."⁷⁸ Campbell's and Poulin's

⁷⁷"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9.

⁷⁸"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin," 6.

dissatisfaction with the KATCOMs was reflected in a report prepared by the Major D.S. MacLennan in May 1954.⁷⁹ Citing "the doubtful value of the program," he recommended that it be cancelled forthwith: six months later the KATCOM program came to an end.⁸⁰

So ended "one of history's most unusual socio-military programs."⁸¹ Although the Canadian Official Historian has written that "no simple judgement on the success of the scheme is possible,"⁸² there can be little doubt that from the perspective of the actual parties involved that the KATCOM program failed miserably.⁸³ Indeed, Robert Hepenstall concluded that "in support of the KATCOM plan, [Brigadier Bogert] showed a remarkable misunderstanding of the men of his brigade."⁸⁴ More accurately, perhaps, Bogert, and by extension the Departments of National Defence

⁷⁹MacLennan was the 25th CIB Brigade Major from 8 May 1954 to 5 November 1954.

⁸⁰"KATCOMs: A Brief On the Situation for Commander, 25th CIB," 4. The KATUSA program continued in the American Army.

⁸¹Skaggs, "The KATUSA Experiment," 53.

⁸²Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 221. It is significant to note that Wood was the Commanding Officer of 3 PPCLI when the KATCOM program was introduced.

⁸³The evidence suggests that this was also the case in the US Army, although it is likely that the American's individual (as opposed to the 25th Brigade's unit) replacement system made the successful integration of the KATUSAs slightly more likely. See Hackworth, *About Face*, 117, 246-247, 633-634.

⁸⁴Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 180.

and External Affairs, demonstrated a fundamental misunderstanding of the importance of small-group cohesion and comradeship to front line soldier. By introducing a poorly trained, culturally disparate element into the Canadian infantry section, the powers that be were tampering with a time-proven, combat-tested organization. At least one Canadian battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin, recognized this and attempted to organize his KATCOMs into their own sections and platoons. However, as Poulin later reported in an interview with the Brigade Historian, the "3 R22eR was not allowed to follow such a method."⁸⁵

To the Canadian soldiers in the firing line, meanwhile, the KATCOMs represented dangerous liabilities in that they threatened the continued survival of themselves and their comrades. That the Canadians considered the KATCOMs untrainable and unassimilable only served to perpetuate this point of view. Thus, in there perceived threat to the Canadian primary group, the KATCOMs, through no fault of their own, found themselves subjected to intense hostility and callous treatment. We can only imagine the fear, loneliness and frustration that the embattled KATCOMs were forced to endure at the hands of their unwilling allies.

⁸⁵"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin," 5. The transcript of this interview was later submitted to Brigadier Allard, Bogert's successor, for vetting. Allard commented that Poulin had indeed been granted permission to organize his KATCOMs in this manner, although there is no evidence to support this.

CONCLUSION

Canadian perceptions of, and relations with, the Koreans they encountered on the battlefield was characterized by an ambivalence which transcended the immediate concerns of race. While this is not to say that racism was not the most important factor in some soldiers' dealings with Koreans, the vast majority appear to have shaped their views of the KSC and the KATCOMs around these organizations' very different relationships with the Canadian primary group. While the KSC reinforced and perpetuated the Canadian group, the KATCOMs threatened its very existence. Unlike the KATCOMs, the men of the KSC were not integrated into Canadian infantry sections -- their sole battlefield purpose was to ensure that the Canadian infantry section was provisioned, supplied and evacuated as the tactical situation dictated. The KATCOMs, on the other hand, were dumped into 25th Brigade infantry sections without due regard for the ramifications this would carry for both Canadian and Korean alike. Though the KATCOM soldier shared many of the same difficulties as the combat replacement in other wartime contexts, most notably improper training, he faced the additional hurdles of language, nationality and culture. Unable to overcome these, the Korean soldier was condemned to languish on the margins of the Canadian primary group, where he often found himself

employed as cannon fodder. But it was not only the KATCOMs who found the exigencies of the Korean battlefield harsh and unjust. Within the 25th Brigade itself the infantry bore the brunt of the fighting and dying to an unprecedented degree, in what the Canadian government euphemistically described a "police action."

CHAPTER SIX

BATTLEFIELD PERFORMANCE AND VIEWS OF THE ENEMY

Combat is harrowing experience at the best of times; in Korea, Canadian soldiers faced the additional hurdles of shoddy equipment and improper training. They also encountered an enemy who was himself well-prepared for the type of small-unit, hit-and-run actions that were such a feature of the fighting in Korea. Together, these disadvantages undermined battlefield performance, and shaped Canadian soldiers' views of the enemy.

BATTLEFIELD PERFORMANCE

Contrary to what the popular historians have claimed, the Canadians did not perform particularly well in Korea. While there were exceptions, notably the 2 PPCLI's stand at Kap'yong and the 2 R22eR's successful defence of Hill 227, the impression is that the 25th Brigade was generally outfought by a better equipped and trained Chinese enemy, particularly during the last 18 months of the war.

The Canadians' decidedly lacklustre performance was in many ways apparent from the outset. It will be recalled from an earlier chapter that much of the 2 PPCLI's pre-battle training was devoted to the tactical defence. Ironically, by the time the battalion commenced active

operations as part of the 27th BCIB in late February 1951, UN forces had recovered from their earlier strategic setbacks and resumed their advance to the 38th parallel. At this time, the Canadians launched a series of small-scale attacks against Chinese rear guard positions with mixed results. The most significant of these occurred on 7 March when they attempted unsuccessfully to dislodge expertly camouflaged Chinese troops from their positions atop Hill 532. In the ensuing attack which saw some of the Patricia assault platoons bunch-up on exposed ridge lines and become lost, the 2 PPCLI lost seven killed and 33 wounded. Only after the Chinese rear guard broke contact the following day were they able to gain the height.

Difficulties were also encountered during the 2 RCR action at Chail-li. Shortly after landing at Pusan with the rest of the 25th Brigade on 4 May, the RCRs were ordered to join the advance to the 38th parallel. Three weeks later, the battalion was in the rugged P'och'on valley in central Korea, pursuing an elusive enemy. Initially, the Chinese were unwilling to engage the advancing Canadians in a set-piece battle. Several prisoners were taken which, according to an intelligence report, "were dirty, ill-kept specimens, poorly dressed, without boots and inadequately equipped, whose reaction to capture appeared to be a combination of

indifference, resignation, and fear."¹

The pathetic condition of the prisoners belied Chinese capabilities and inspired a sense of false confidence in the as yet untried Canadians. For this reason, perhaps, the 2 RCR was given the difficult task of capturing Hill 467, a formidable twin-peaked height that overlooked the village of Chail-li. The attack began in the early morning hours of 30 May, with a flanking manoeuvre reminiscent of the Normandy campaign. Almost immediately the Canadians came under heavy fire, and were unable to make any appreciable progress up the feature's steep granite precipices. Unbeknownst to the Canadians, the hill was the backbone of Chinese defences in the vicinity of Chail-li, and was well-fortified with trenches and weapons pits. The Canadians, however, continued to press their attack, calling for supporting fire from the 2 RCHA's 25 pounder field guns. Artillery fire failed to dislodge the well-entrenched Chinese defenders. Smoke from the shoot mixed with the heavy monsoon mist that hung over the crest of the hill, reducing visibility to only several yards, and denying critical supporting fire to the Canadians. In view of the hopelessness of the attack, Brigadier Rockingham ordered the battalion to fall back short of its objective.

As at Hill 532, the price for failure at Chail-li was

¹"The Battle of Chail-li, 2 RCR, 30 May 1951," DHist, file 145.2R13013(D2), 2. The POWs may have been deserters.

high: six Canadians were killed and 25 wounded. Commenting on the battle, a Canadian officer wrote: "If one can reach any positive conclusion from such limited experience, that conclusion would be that some of the tactics we had been told were being employed in Korea, are not in fact necessarily the proper ones."² In the 25th Brigade's first significant engagement in Korea, the Canadians employed the familiar tactics of mobile warfare in Northwest Europe.³ After all, that is what they had been trained for. In the mountainous Korean terrain, fighting against a well-equipped and highly resolute enemy, a different, more flexible approach was required. Even the Official Historian considered the botched RCR attack "a tactical error."⁴ As we shall see, the Canadians never succeeded in modifying their tactics to suit conditions in Korea, a failure that became increasingly apparent as the war progressed. During the late summer and early fall of 1951, the 25th Brigade, now part of the 1st Commonwealth Division, participated in a series of operations which saw UN forces advance to the *Jamestown* line. These were relatively uneventful affairs -- the RCR Regimental Historian dismissed them as "Sundry Operations"⁵ -- as evidenced by the low

²"C Company Report to the Battle of Chail-li," 1.

³Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 105.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment*, 230-231.

number of Canadian casualties. More significantly, the consolidation of the *Jamestown* line coincided with renewed efforts to end the war in Korea.

Truce talks were first initiated in July but broke off after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on the location of a demarcation line. On 25 October they were resumed in the village of Panmunjom, only to stall once again over the question of prisoner repatriation. The truce talks were destined to drag on for another two years before the two sides were able to agree on the terms of an armistice. Meanwhile, on 12 November the UN Command ordered the Eighth US Army of which the 25th Brigade was a part, "not to engage in further offensive operations but instead to maintain an active defence."⁶

The opening of truce talks and the UN Command's concomitant policy of "active defence" represented a watershed in the Korean War. Previously, the fighting had been relatively mobile and the battle lines fluid. During this period, the UN forces' ultimate objective was to defeat the enemy in the field. Now, the fighting became static and attritional, with the belligerents occupying semi-permanent defensive positions on opposite sides of the *Jamestown* line. Henceforth there would be no victory in Korea. Operations were confined to raiding and patrolling, as the two sides attempted to reach a political solution to the war in Korea.

⁶Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 160.

In this changed strategic and tactical context, the Canadians' equipment and training deficiencies became readily apparent. In a 1953 paper on infantry patrolling in Korea, Major Harry Pope wrote:

For the past year and more the enemy has held the tactical initiative in no-man's land. He has raided our outposts and forward positions and ambushed our patrols at will. We, on the other hand with only one or two exceptions, have not carried out any successful operations forward of our lines.⁷

Korean veterans have themselves commented on the lack of success. Second-Lieutenant C.E. Goodman of the 2nd and 1st R22eR recalled that "the patrols I took out were singularly unsuccessful," while according to 1 PPCLI's Sergeant John Richardson, "no-man's land was a huge wide area. We needed, but didn't get, new techniques to deal with the distance involved in crossing the valley... Still, the brass would not change their policy."⁸

Despite these difficulties,⁹ the Canadians continued to partake in patrol operations.¹⁰ The operational directive

⁷Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 1.

⁸Second-Lieutenant C.E. Goodman, 2/1/R22eR, and Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 201.

⁹The failure of Canadian fighting patrols was due in part to inadequate reconnaissance and the practice of establishing firm bases, followed by small group advances. Major Harry Pope considered the Chinese practice of patrolling in-depth to be far more effective. See Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 9-20.

¹⁰See, for example, "Patrol Contacts and Results of Recces, July 1952," War Diary, 1 PPCLI, August 1952, Appendix "A".

issued by the UN Command in May 1952 ordering each forward battalion "to carry out one strong fighting patrol a week against known enemy positions" and "to produce one prisoner every three days" obviously had a role to play in this.¹¹ This policy was, however, extremely unpopular with both the 1st US Marine and Commonwealth divisions. They maintained that patrols should be dispatched by commanders in the field according to the tactical situation at hand rather than to a rigid timetable formulated by staff officers in the comfortable surroundings of their air conditioned offices.¹² The patrol policy was eventually amended to accommodate Marine and Commonwealth objections, but this did not translate into improved performance in the 25th Brigade. The reality was that Canadian patrols were routinely out-gunned and out-fought by a highly capable Chinese enemy. A post-war report summed up the Canadian patrol experience in Korea:

We despatched a large number of patrols, the greater part of them ambush patrols, to operate in no-man's land. Very few of them made contact; the contacts which were made occurred, on more occasions than would seem desirable, *when our ambushes were ambushed by the enemy*. In June 1952, for example, we set 25 ambushes in no-man's land; only one of these resulted in a contact. On this occasion, our patrol was surrounded and engaged by an enemy group.¹³

¹¹Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 186.

¹²"Patrol Policy, 3 June 1952," War Diary, 1 PPCLI, June 1952, Appendix 1.

¹³"Address by Major-General to AHQ Officer, 16 December 1954," DHist, file 681.011(D2), 4. Emphasis is the author's.

All this is not to say that every Canadian patrol ended in failure. The most obvious exception was the recce-cum-snatch patrol lead by Lieutenant H.R. Gardner and Corporal K.E. Fowler in late September 1952. Following a 48 hour lie-up in no-man's land where they observed activity in a Chinese field kitchen, the two men snatched a lone enemy soldier and returned to Canadian lines. Underlying the patrol's success was exceptional planning and preparation, and an emphasis on "stealth and surprise -- key elements in the success of Canadian trench raids in the First World War" that had been all but forgotten in Korea.¹⁴ Indeed, this decidedly minor episode would have passed unnoticed in an earlier war, yet Gardner was awarded the Military Cross and Fowler the Military Metal. The lavish decorations underscored the fact that even such modest success was far from routine. Even in the 25th Brigade the Gardiner-Fowler patrol was regarded as the exception that proved the rule of poor Canadian patrol performance.¹⁵

Another reflection of the Canadians' inability to conduct successful patrols was their increasing reliance on support weapons. Through the summer of 1952 there was a

¹⁴Christopher Doary, "Miniature Set-Piece Battles: Infantry Patrolling Operations in Korea, May-June 1952," *Canadian Military History*, Volume 6, Number 1 (spring 1997), 29.

¹⁵"Address by Major-General H. Murray, 16 December 1954," 3; Pope, "Infantry Patrolling In Korea," 12.

growing tendency to use artillery, in the form of 81mm mortars and 25 pounder field guns,¹⁶ to compensate for the infantry's inadequate small arms and training. Encounters with the enemy that could have just as easily been settled with quick-firing personal weapons and effective small-unit tactics now hinged on the timely and effective use of overwhelming fire power. An Operational Research report noted:

there is a tendency to let artillery and mortars do jobs which at one time might have been done by a good sniper. Artillery has frequently been used when a single individual movement has been observed, in hope that other enemy were in the vicinity. As far as the damage done is concerned, artillery has frequently been wasted, but the large amount of firing has had the beneficial effect of keeping the gunners in good training....¹⁷

Other problems were associated with the over-reliance on artillery fire. Patrols became utterly dependant on radio sets and their operators for survival in a fire-fight, an uncomfortable prospect at the best of times. Poor weather, a dead battery, or a panicked operator could spell the difference between living to see the morning sun rise and a one way trip to the UN cemetery at Pusan. To make matters even worse, Canadian radios were not notably reliable. The 3 R22eR's Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin explained:

¹⁶These were located just behind the MLR with the RCHA.

¹⁷"CAORE Notes On Operational Research in Korea, 18 April 1952," DHist, file 112.3W1013(D13), 4.

The no. 62 set proved to be generally speaking a better set than the no. 19 set. [However] the hand sets proved quite inadequate and the pretzel switches were more often broken than not; here there is a great need for improvement and this applies to all the hand sets in our [radios].

The no. 31 set proved to be a good reliable sturdy set but an improvement is definitely indicated [sic] in the base of the aerial intake. Too frequently when walking through [communications] trenches or underbrush, the aerial would snap from its inadequate base and fall to the ground unknown to the operator who would be without adequate [communications].

The no. 88 set generally proved useless....¹⁸

Nor did the lavish use of artillery fire necessarily translate into heavy enemy casualties. Using language that has come to be associated with a subsequent Asian conflict, a post-war Canadian report lamented the absence of "accurate body counts to confirm" the effectiveness of the fire support allocated to Canadian patrols.¹⁹ As a further reflection of indifferent Canadian tactical performance, body-counts became an increasingly popular yardstick for measuring the success of patrol contacts as the war dragged on. After-action reports usually attributed the absence of enemy dead and wounded to their penchant for "policing the battlefield" after an engagement. However, the RCR Regimental historian had this to say about the over-reliance on support weapons and the absence of enemy casualties:

It was an excellent plan to have someone outside the range of the enemy to do the killing for the forward troops, but the cold fact was that unless such weapons had more or less stationary targets their fire was

¹⁸"Summary of Experience - 3 R22eR," 4.

¹⁹"Address by Major-General H. Murray," 4.

often wasted on empty arcs. There would seem to be little reason to believe that the Chinese carried away their dead and the few bodies found suggested that the enemy groups were much smaller than their fire volume indicated. The smaller the group, the lesser the target, the greater its mobility.²⁰

What the RCR historian was referring to was the tactic of dispersion, the practice of scattering troops to present as small as target as possible to enemy gunners. Rapid dispersal was relatively easy to effect in the undulating terrain of no-man's land, and helped to negate the destructive effects of Canadian artillery fire.

Alternatively, Chinese troops might "hug" a beleaguered Canadian patrol. By maintaining close contact -- ten yards distance was not uncommon²¹ -- the Chinese avoided the destructive wrath of Canadian supporting fire. They were also in a fortuitous position to exploit the superior fire power of their individual weapons. Using this tactic, the Chinese often pursued the Canadians all the way back to their own lines, inflicting casualties along the way.²²

The net result of the 25th Brigade's inability to patrol effectively was that the Chinese were able to dominate no-man's land.²³ Korean veteran and writer Robert

²⁰Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, Volume Two*, 275.

²¹Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 13.

²²This tactic was used with devastating effect on 3 May 1953 when a 3 RCR fighting patrol was pursued from the valley floor all the way up to its forward positions.

²³Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 1.

Hepenstall sarcastically suggested that "a better name for [no-man's land] might have been 'Joe Chinks Front Yard,' as he owned and controlled the territory."²⁴ Official sources corroborate this assessment through a clutch of euphemistic phrases, like "the Chinese... demonstrated an uncomfortably intimate knowledge of... our side of no-man's land,"²⁵ and "[patrol contacts] have detected the presence of enemy in areas which constituted a threat to friendly positions."²⁶

One of the most startling examples of the price to be paid for surrendering control of no-man's land to the enemy occurred during the Chinese attack on Hill 355 in late October 1952. The hill was the dominating feature in the Canadian sector of the *Jamestown* line, and at the time was occupied by the 1 RCR.²⁷

The raid on Hill 355 developed over the course of several weeks, during which time the Chinese consolidated

²⁴Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 136.

²⁵"Address by Major-General H. Murray," 3.

²⁶"Appendix A to 1 Commonwealth Division OPS/INT Summary No. 141, 11 December 1952 - Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," War Diary, 1 RCR, November 1952, Appendix 28, 4.

²⁷Coverage of all the raids launched against the 25th Brigade are clearly beyond the scope of this work. The raids that have been selected for analysis were chosen for their instructive abilities, and because of the abundance of primary source material that was generated in their aftermath. They are also among the most significant and best-known Canadian actions of the Korean War.

their control of no-man's land.²⁸ Following the destruction of the "Vancouver" outpost on 2 October, and the successful ambush of an RCR fighting patrol on the night of 12-13 October, the enemy began to send reconnaissance patrols right up to the forward defensive positions. They were able to get so close that they pelted the Canadians with stones in an attempt, sometimes successfully, to draw small arms fire and disclose defensive arrangements. With the Chinese just outside their wire, the RCRs were unable to send out their own patrols. They were now in the unenviable position of fighting blind.

On 22 October nearly 2500 shells fell on Hill 355.²⁹ Holed up in their flimsy bunkers, the RCRs could do little but wait for the now imminent Chinese assault. This came on 23 October, when several hundred Chinese troops who had been laid-up in specially constructed caves in no-man's land rushed into the RCR trenches on the heels of a massive bombardment. The Chinese quickly overran the forward RCR company, and engaged a neighbouring company in a fierce fire-fight. The Canadians called for artillery and mortar fire on the overrun position, which they eventually regained with a counter attack. By this time, however, the Chinese, having satisfied their objectives, had pulled back.

²⁸"Report On 1 RCR Action Night 23/24 October 1952, 25 November 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, December 1952, Appendix 28, 1.

²⁹"Report On 1 RCR Action Night 23/24 October 1952," 1.

The raid on Hill 355 was a costly lesson in the failure to patrol vigorously and effectively: in the month leading up to the attack, over 150 Royals became casualties, including 14 prisoners taken during the raid itself. Though the RCR's retained the height, it can hardly be considered a Canadian victory. For the Chinese objective was not to seize ground, but to capture prisoners, destroy defensive positions, and weaken Canadian resolve. In this regard, they succeeded marvellously. Such was the price for allowing the enemy to dominate no-man's land.

Ineffective patrolling was not the only problem confronting the 25th Brigade as the static war raged on: their defensive positions along the *Jamestown* line also left much to be desired. Fighting trenches were insufficiently revetted, lacked overhead cover and were not situated to provide effective mutual support. Bunkers were not deep enough and too far removed from the forward trenches. Communications trenches were not covered with wire and they were clearly outlined to the enemy by the piles of spoil, rubbish, and beer bottles³⁰ that accumulated on the lips. Wiring along the Canadians' front was too thin and, in most cases, unable to withstand Chinese artillery bombardments because it was strung too taught. Finally, the protective mine fields that skirted the Canadians' positions were easily breached by enemy sappers, inspiring "a false sense

³⁰Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 7.

of security" in the defenders.³¹

Obviously, many of these shortcomings had their roots in improper training. This was especially true in regards to trench maintenance, and the uniquely Canadian practice of disposing "of rubbish by the simple expedient of throwing it out in front of the wire,"³² or over the lip of a communications trench. According to Australian historian Jeffrey Grey, such practices and others were routinely condemned by the Commonwealth units who relieved the Canadians in the line.³³

It is deceptively easy to blame this type of behaviour on "poor discipline." Yet, as has been shown in an earlier chapter, the Canadians were not properly trained in the construction and maintenance of defensive positions. When faced with the seemingly mundane question of what to do with an empty C-ration tin or beer bottle, and in the absence of proper training, even the most unimaginative soldier would resort to the seemingly logical, yet tactically dangerous, expedient of tossing it out of his trench. To dismiss such behaviour as evidence of poor discipline ignores the very real shortcomings in Canadian infantry training. Brigadier Bogert's successor, Brigadier Jean Victor Allard hinted at

³¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 8-9.

³²Jeffrey Grey, *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War: An Alliance Study* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 150.

³³*Ibid.*, 151.

this when he wrote that, "deliberate defence is in many respects foreign to the average Canadian officer."³⁴

Training aside, to fully understand the origins of the 25th Brigade's defensive difficulties it is necessary to go back to the consolidation of the *Jamestown* line.³⁵

According to Major Harry Pope:

Convinced that we knew all about the art of war, merely because of our own happy war-time experiences, we applied our... defence techniques without variation to the Korean hills we occupied in October-November 1951. As the enemy shelling increased - and with its nasty-minded probes - we remembered the stories of our fathers and began digging and wiring in the positions we had first occupied in the 1940-45 pattern. By simply developing our hills on the... defence techniques of 1940-45 and on the dug-in techniques of 1914-1918 we made the mistake of not extracting all the lessons of the Great War.³⁶

From the outset, the Canadians and their Commonwealth allies should have developed their hill-top defensive positions as if they were "castles," heavily fortified with several lines of First World War-style mutually supporting fighting trenches.³⁷ As it were, the Canadians -- and this

³⁴"Notes On Defence, 1 May 1953," War Diary, 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade, April-May 1953.

³⁵Anthony Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War: Volume II, An Honourable Discharge* (London: HMSO, 1995), 354.

³⁶Major Harry Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea, 5 October 1953," DHist, file 681.009(D11), 2.

³⁷For a more detailed account of the inadequacy of Commonwealth defensive doctrine in Korea see David J. Bercuson, "Fighting the Defensive Battle on the Jamestown Line: The Canadians in Korea, November 1951," *Canadian Military History*, Volume 7, Number 3 (summer 1998), 13-16.

is true of all the Commonwealth formations, but not the Chinese -- relied on a single ring of fighting trenches just below the crest of the hills they occupied. To make matters even worse, Commonwealth units occupied too many hilltops, almost every one to be exact, in their sectors. As David Bercuson noted, "This was the Italian model, good for troops planning to move up against an enemy not planning to move back, but tempting to a habitual attacker."³⁸ The failure to develop defensive positions properly was usually blamed on any non-Commonwealth units that might have previously occupied the position. Yet, as will be shown momentarily, the so-called "capital investment" theory,³⁹ that is was too time consuming and laborious to re-dig a defensive position, was hardly an adequate excuse for the very serious defensive deficiencies that characterized Commonwealth positions in general, and Canadian ones in particular. In the 25th Brigade, the failure to develop defensive positions properly was not fully appreciated until the final year of the conflict, in the aftermath of the bloodiest Canadian battle of the Korean War.

In April 1953 the 3 RCR replaced the 1 R22eR in the front line in the vicinity of Hill 97 as part of the third annual rotation. Over the course of the next month, the

³⁸Ibid., 14.

³⁹"Personal Recollections of the Field Works of Wyoming, Jamestown, and Kansas lines in Korea, prepared by Captain Maden, September 1954," DHist, file 681.011(D1), 1.

battalion tried unsuccessfully to wrest control of no-man's land from the enemy through a series of patrol actions. At the same time, the Royals apparently tried to shore up their dilapidated defences. After the war, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell blamed the previous occupants from the 2 UN Division for the position's poor condition. However, according to the 25th Brigade Historical Officer, "it would be unfair to blame 2 UN Division too greatly, for the [Canadians] had occupied the [same position] for months and months [before the 2 UN Division]."⁴⁰ In any event, the 3 RCR was unable to make any appreciable progress due to what appeared to be constant artillery harassment. An examination of the shell fragments that littered the Canadians' positions, however, revealed that many different kinds of guns were being used in the bombardments. This suggested that the Chinese were pre-registering their artillery in preparation for a major attack.

The attack came on the night of 2-3 May 1953. Following an intense artillery concentration, Chinese grenadiers and assault troops stormed the Canadian trenches and succeeded in overrunning the forward positions of Charlie Company. The Canadians responded by calling for supporting fire to be brought down on their positions. This was followed by a combined infantry-tank counter attack that appeared to drive the remaining Chinese out of the

⁴⁰"Personal Recollection of the Field Works," 2.

position,⁴¹ but in reality the enemy, having satisfied his objectives, was already pulling back under a thick cover of protective smoke.⁴²

The attack cost the Royals dearly. Thirty Canadian and KATCOM soldiers were killed, 41 wounded, and 11 taken prisoner or missing. Brigadier J.V. Allard, considered the attack a Canadian defeat "in that the Chinese achieved their objectives of inflicting casualties, taking prisoners, destroying defences and clearing their dead and wounded from the battlefield."⁴³

In retrospect, it is unlikely that the Canadians would have suffered such grievous losses had their defensive positions been better prepared. The extent to which the positions had been allowed to deteriorate, combined with their unsatisfactory layout and wiring, made defence of the forward RCR company position practically impossible.

As has been seen, the Canadians' defensive positions had been developed during the consolation of the *Jamestown* line. As the British Official Historian observed, many of these "had been positioned hastily in former enemy trenches

⁴¹Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 4.

⁴²"Interview with Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 6.

⁴³War Diary, 25 Canadian Field Historical Detachment, December 1953, Appendix No. 4, cited in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 236.

or bunkers following struggles for territory."⁴⁴

At this time, however, the Chinese possessed little in the way of artillery support. The following year witnessed a steady increase in Chinese artillery capabilities to the extent that the Canadians' flimsily constructed fighting trenches no longer offered adequate protection against a sustained bombardment. One alternative was to seek shelter in bunkers situated *behind* the fighting positions, and wait for the fire to lift before making the thirty or so yard dash back to the fighting trenches (if they were still intact) to engage the attacking enemy with small arms and grenades. All too often, however, the Chinese assault troops would be on top of the Canadians *before* they had a chance to reach their fighting trenches. As was the case on Hill 355, vicious close combat quickly ensued in which the rifle-equipped Canadians were at a decided disadvantage. As Major Harry Pope remarked, "rifles at five paces at night, with or without bayonets fixed, give no confidence against a burp gun."⁴⁵

The other, indeed preferred, option was to stay in the bunkers and call for supporting fire on the position itself. This tactic was effective during the Battle of Kap'yong in April 1951, where an impressive volume of proximity-fused

⁴⁴Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, Volume II, 354.

⁴⁵Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 3.

shrapnel shells was brought to bear on the 2 PPCLI positions. Caught out in the open, the attacking Chinese were decimated by the fire, while the defenders hunkered down in their fox holes. This approach was also successful during the 2 R22eR's successful defence of Hill 227 in November 1951. An after action report recounted:

When the Chinese attacked it was merely a matter of increasing the rate of [supporting] fire... The mortars, which were located on the reverse slope... fired 9,400 rounds between 1600 hours on the 23rd and 0800 hours on the 26th. At one stage... the barrels became so hot that they were transparent and the rounds could be seen going up the spout even before they left the barrels.⁴⁶

Sitting tight in a bunker while friendly artillery and mortar fire was brought to bear became less effective as the fighting solidified into a static, attritional affair, and the Chinese abandoned their Kap'yong and Hill 227-style "human wave tactics under light supporting fire."⁴⁷ The maze of communications trenches connecting the fighting positions along the *Jamestown* line, conveniently outlined by the garbage and spoil that accumulated along their lips and lacking any sort of protective wire, now provided the

⁴⁶"Interview With Major R. Liboiron, Lieutenant R. MacDuff, Lieutenant W. Nash, Lieutenant T.R. Webb, 2 R22eR, Concerning the Battle of Hill 227, 23-25 November 1951, by Historical Officer 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade, 1 December 1951," DHist, file 410B25.013(D12), 11.

⁴⁷Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, Volume II, 370.

attacking Chinese with a source of cover.⁴⁸ Safe from the destructive wrath of Canadian supporting fire, "the enemy machine carbine assault teams [entered Canadian trenches]... went about their work of execution and securing of prisoners."⁴⁹ This is exactly what happened to the 3 RCR; it was only after the raid that Brigadier Allard finally ordered "the tops of all trenches... to be wired with single strands of barbed wire, criss-crossed just below the lip of the trench."⁵⁰

All in all, there can be little doubt that Canadian tactical performance left much to be desired during the Korean War, particularly "in the last 18 months before the cease fire."⁵¹ In so far as defensive doctrine was concerned, this was a shortcoming shared with other Commonwealth forces. Yet, there is compelling evidence that in the areas of patrolling and the construction and maintenance of defensive positions, the Canadians were far less adept than some of their Commonwealth cousins.⁵² The gulf between the Canadians and their Chinese enemies was even greater.

⁴⁸"Personal Recollection of the Field Works of Wyoming, Jamestown, and Kansas Lines in Korea," 11.

⁴⁹Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 3.

⁵⁰Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 228.

⁵¹Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 5.

⁵²Grey, *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War*, 150-153.

THE CHINESE ENEMY

By all accounts, the Chinese were excellent at patrolling; according to a Commonwealth Division Intelligence Summary, "there are many lessons to be learned from contacts with Chinese patrols."⁵³ They excelled at night-fighting, their field craft was first rate, and their training was sound.⁵⁴ On making contact, the Chinese used fire and manoeuvre to outflank and encircle an enemy patrol, giving the impression that they were attacking from all sides simultaneously. Ruses were frequently used to lure enemy patrols into ambushes, leading an after action report to warn that "cries of 'help' must always be investigated with suspicion."⁵⁵ Lying in ambush, the Chinese made maximum use of foliage -- or white sheets in the snow -- to conceal themselves. It was not uncommon for an ambush party to remain hidden in the waist-high scrub of no-man's land, their caps and belts stuffed with grass and leaves, for up to 24 hours waiting for an unwary patrol to stumble into their killing zone.

Camouflage and concealment was aided by their field uniforms and equipment. During the winter months the

⁵³"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 1.

⁵⁴Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War: Volume II*, 370-371.

⁵⁵"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 2.

Chinese wore a khaki padded-cotton suit⁵⁶ that made very little noise and blended well in the overgrown rice paddies and brownish scrub brush of no-man's land.⁵⁷ In summer, the winter suit was exchanged for a light olive cotton uniform that was equally effective. A light canvass sneaker was used in preference to the heavy, noisy, cumbersome combat boot worn by most UN soldiers. As a further reflection of the emphasis placed on mobility, Chinese soldiers seldom wore elaborate load bearing equipment, and carried only the bare essentials. A cloth ammunition bandolier, water bottle, and bag containing a rice ball and some salt comprised the standard combat load.⁵⁸

Individual weapons were also selected with mobility and efficiency in mind. Early in the war the Chinese had been armed with a hodge podge of Japanese, Soviet, American, and Commonwealth weapons, including a large number of cumbersome bolt-action rifles. As was the case with artillery, the quality of the Chinese infantry's small arms improved dramatically during the second year of the war. The preferred weapons were the Soviet-designed PPS-43 and PPSH-

⁵⁶War Dairy, 1 PPCLI, 6 November 1951.

⁵⁷Chinese winter uniforms are on display at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

⁵⁸"Uniforms of the Korean War," PPCLI Archives, file 132(2)-1, 4.

41 "burp guns."⁵⁹ The latter weapon was especially suited to the type of fighting encountered in Korea after the consolidation of the *Jamestown* line. Firing 900 rounds per minute from 71-round drums,⁶⁰ a PPSH-41-equipped squad could produce a tremendous amount of quickly-adjusted fire at close range.

As seen in an earlier chapter, the Chinese made extensive use of grenades. After action reports frequently alluded to the Chinese grenades' insufficient killing power, but such assessments missed the point. Chinese grenades were of the "offensive" variety, in that they were primarily designed to induce shock in a defender through concussion and inflicting minor wounds. As a Commonwealth Division Intelligence Summary despondently noted, this "increased the chances of capturing wounded prisoners without disclosing the enemy's position."⁶¹

As the American Army discovered in Vietnam, first-rate weapons are no guarantee of battlefield success. Proper training is even more important. At the root of Chinese success, was their use of "specially trained" patrol troops who were "kept in the rear echelons until" a patrol was

⁵⁹Hogg and Adam, *Jane's Guns Recognition Guide*, 263-264.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 2.

ordered.⁶² This contrasted markedly with the Canadian practice of rotating patrol tasks amongst all front line units. From the perspective of Canadian soldiers, patrolling was "a routine task that came around to their platoon every third night and was interspersed with other routine assignments of standing guard, cleaning up the area, laying wire and digging."⁶³ The use of general-purpose troops who were inadequately trained in the fine art of patrolling led Major Harry Pope to conclude that "the basic sense of mission' was lacking... No special training was given to these important patrols, no rehearsal over ground similar to be attacked, no time for the groups even to begin to think or act as a team."⁶⁴

Although the Chinese do not appear to have manned their defensive positions along the *Jamestown* line with specialized fortress or mountain troops, the overall standard of defensive training among Chinese formations seems to have been high. As Major Harry Pope noted in his "Infantry Defences in Korea":

1st Commonwealth Division made no attacks and only a few company sized raids on the enemy in the last 18 months before the ceasefire. No deep penetration was effected. It is therefore not possible to describe in detail enemy defences and defensive techniques apart

⁶²Pope, "Infantry Patrolling In Korea," 6.

⁶³Pope, "Infantry Patrolling In Korea," 9-10.

⁶⁴Pope, "Infantry Patrolling In Korea," 10.

from his patrolling.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, it is possible to make some general points about Chinese field defences. First, the Chinese appear to have developed their defensive positions according to the castle principle, using three lines of mutually supporting trench lines connected by deep tunnels.⁶⁶ Tunnels permitted the rapid withdrawal or reinforcement of a trench line without exposing the defenders to UN artillery fire. They also kept the attackers out in the open, making them vulnerable to fire from the trenches further up the hill. Portending events in Vietnam, Major Harry Pope noted the reluctance of western soldiers to enter these tunnels. "Our side would, not unnaturally," he wrote, "be unhappy about following the enemy into his tunnels and we would content ourselves with throwing grenades and charges."⁶⁷

Paradoxically, Chinese field defences owed much of their success to UN air superiority and, at least initially, its preponderance in field artillery.⁶⁸ They were therefore constructed to withstand the very worst the UN had to offer from the outset. Finally, the Chinese were able to draw on apparently unlimited manpower resources to construct and maintain their elaborate field works. Yet, all this must

⁶⁵Pope, "Infantry Defences In Korea," 5.

⁶⁶"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 4.

⁶⁷Pope, "Infantry Defences In Korea," 5.

⁶⁸"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 4.

not allow us to lose sight of the defensive acumen of the individual Chinese soldier. According to a Commonwealth Division report, "the Chinese soldier digs in quickly and deeply which effectively protects him from UN bombardments. He immediately takes up his fighting positions to defend his sector when the shelling subsides."⁶⁹ The Canadians obviously had much to learn from their opponents across no-man's land.

VIEWS OF THE ENEMY

This discussion of Canadian tactical shortcomings, and the corresponding strengths of the Chinese, has carried us some distance from the "social" focus of this work. This deviation has been necessary to understand another important aspect of Canadian soldiers' Korean experiences: their views of the Chinese enemy.

The average Canadian combat soldier had a tremendous amount of respect for his Chinese counterpart. This was not the result of an innate appreciation of the Chinese culture(s) or language(s), but rather a recognition of the tactical proficiency of a very capable opponent. Indeed, the available evidence strongly suggests that this respect became more pronounced as the Canadians' tactical difficulties increased.

⁶⁹"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 4.

Having said this, traditional racist stereotypes characterized some of the Canadians' early encounters with the Chinese. Just prior to the 2 RCR's ill-fated attack on Chail-li, the Laundry and Bath platoon of the 25th Brigade Ordnance Company managed to capture two Chinese deserters. The platoon captured three more in the days that followed, leading one platoon commander to comment that "it was rumoured at the time... that the poor fellows had heard that there was a laundry in the vicinity and had merely come in looking for a job."⁷⁰

Images of the yellow peril were also present in some of the Canadians' early situation reports. On at least one occasion 2 PPCLI's Lieutenant-Colonel Stone spoke of the necessity of properly prepared defensive positions to "kill at will the hordes that rush the positions...."⁷¹ As Craig Cameron noted, "the comparatively larger masses of troops actually seen in the open gave combat operations much more the appearance of battling 'Yellow hordes' than had been the case against the Japanese."⁷² Certainly the human wave attacks encountered at the Battle of Kap'yeong reinforced the imagery of a beleaguered force making an epic stand against the "Yellow hordes." Such was also the case during the 2

⁷⁰Major R. Ringma, quoted in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 101.

⁷¹2PP-5-0, "Sitreps By 25th CIB," 2.

⁷²Cameron, *American Samurai*, 232.

R22eR's successful defence of Hill 227 in November 1951. A platoon commander recalled:

Small groups of 10 to 15 each could be seen moving down the hill and concentrating in larger groups in the valleys. These in turn would concentrate in still larger groups closer to our lines. They were in plain view and beautiful artillery concentrations must have killed and wounded a great many. I [the commander of Major Liboiron's left platoon] would estimate that the largest group of Chinese numbered approximately 500....⁷³

Such large concentrations of enemy, combined with their apparent disregard for casualties -- it was claimed that Chinese assault troops attacked *through* their own supporting fire -- shaped another racist perception, namely that the enemy was high on opium. Major Liboiron, the Officer Commanding 2 R22eR's Dog Company, recalled:

The majority of my men believe that the Chinese were doped before they were committed to battle because they were completely oblivious to danger. They stood up fully exposed when the heaviest of our mortar and artillery concentrations were coming down and apparently had absolutely no regard for their own personal safety.⁷⁴

The "doped-up" Chinese assault troops were also rumoured to have been led by a woman. "She was described as being dressed in black or dark coloured clothing and was easily recognizable as a woman by her long black hair."⁷⁵ A 2 R22eR soldier later claimed to have killed the so-called

⁷³"Interview, 1 December 1951," reprinted in Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 156-157.

⁷⁴"Interview With Major R. Liboiron," 10.

⁷⁵"Interview With Major R. Liboiron," 8.

"Dragon Lady," but there is no proof of this.

Images of bedraggled laundrymen, or alternatively, doped-up Asiatic hordes led by sinister, yet erotic, "Dragon Ladies," became increasingly tenuous as the war progressed; the Chinese abandoned human wave tactics and the Canadians found themselves increasingly out-fought by a highly skilled enemy. It would have been extraordinarily difficult for even the most parochial Canadian soldier to maintain a sense of condescending superiority in such circumstances. In the aftermath of the attack on Hill 355, Commonwealth Division Headquarters found it necessary to circulate a memorandum stating that "the Chinese soldier is not a superman."⁷⁶

Contributing to the image of the Chinese soldier as "a superman" was the nature of the fighting along the *Jamestown* line. Very, very few soldiers actually captured more than a fleeting glimpse of their Chinese counterparts during patrol clashes or raids. That almost all of the fighting was conducted in the dark, or under the half-light of descending parachute flares contributed to the sense of unreality and fear. The enemy henceforth became a deadly shadow of a man, who stalked the over-grown rice-paddies of no-man's land with the cunning and skill of a professional hunter.

The "superman" image of Chinese soldiers combined with their elusiveness to make them objects of intense curiosity.

⁷⁶"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 4.

The day after the cease-fire came into effect, for example, Major-General West, the Commander of the Commonwealth Division, found it necessary to issue orders banning fraternization with the enemy and to put a stop to "the hundreds of military 'tourists' [who] converged on the front lines, armed with cameras and an insatiable curiosity."⁷⁷ As one soldier put it, "everyone wanted to have a look at the little bastards who kicked our asses up and down the Sam'ichon Valley."⁷⁸

Even Chinese corpses became objects of intense curiosity. Sergeant John Richardson recalled:

The Chinese looked so young and small in their baggy uniforms, with their small hands and feet. There was a Chinese corpse hanging on our defensive barb wire; he looked no more than fifteen years old, with his little peaked cap and deathly pale face and hands.⁷⁹

Korean veteran and artist Ted Zuber captured this haunting image in his painting *Welcome Party*.⁸⁰ In it, two Canadian replacements are greeted by a forward platoon sergeant as they make their way along a communications trench. Both soldiers are transfixed by the Chinese corpses that hang in the wire, one of whose arms is outstretched as if to post a grenade, only yards away from where they are standing.

⁷⁷Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 243.

⁷⁸Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁷⁹Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 178-179.

⁸⁰Ted Zuber, *Welcome Party*, Canadian War Museum 90026.

CONCLUSION

Being left to hang in the enemy's wire or eviscerated by a hand grenade was, of course, a fate to be avoided at all costs. Facing a well-prepared enemy without the benefit of proper training and equipment, Canadian soldiers confronted the prospect of imminent death every time the sun dipped below the horizon. In the inky blackness of the Korean night, survival became the end that justified the means.

CHAPTER SEVEN

COMBAT

Indifferent battlefield performance had a pronounced effect on combat motivation, or as John Keegan called it, "the will to combat,"¹ in the 25th Brigade. Expected to fight a deadly opponent on what can only be considered unequal terms, a minority of Canadian soldiers became psychological casualties, or resorted to self-inflicted wounds as a way out of the combat zone. But what was most unique about the Canadian combat experience in Korea, was not how many men succumbed to the strain of battle, but how many soldiered on in spite of it.

THE WILL TO COMBAT

In his scathing indictment of Canadian patrolling in Korea, Major Harry Pope noted "a defensive attitude, a lack of aggressiveness, and a strong desire not to close with the enemy, on the part of troops."² This was not necessarily always the case. Aggression does not appear to have been at a premium during the "Sundry Operations"³ that took the 25th Brigade to the Jamestown line,⁴ and nor was there any

¹See Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 114.

²Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 1.

³Stevens, *Royal Canadian Regiment*, 230-231.

shortage of it at the Battles of Kap'yong and Hill 227.

Indeed, the 2 R22eR's Major Liboiron considered "the will to fight" as one of the "factors [that] saved the position from falling into the Chinese hands [sic] and won the Battle of Hill 227."⁵ Lieutenant-Colonel Stone also recalled a strong "fighting spirit" in his men at Kap'yong.⁶

This was not to last. As Canadian tactical fortunes declined through 1952, fighting spirit at the sharp end was blunted. The British Official Historian suggested that this was a problem throughout the entire Commonwealth Division,⁷ although oral sources contradict this blanket characterization,⁸ as does Jeffrey Grey. He argued that the Australians were too aggressive, and occasionally found themselves fighting "fierce small-unit actions inside the Chinese positions."⁹ He also suggested that

⁴See, for example, the after action report for "Operation Rodger, 13-15 August 1951," War Diary, 2 RCR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,342, August 1951.

⁵"Interview With Major R. Liboiron," 10.

⁶Colonel J.R. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.

⁷Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, 366.

⁸Korean veteran and author Robert Hepenstall considered the Canadians to be "on par with the Dutch and Belgium battalions. They were better than some, but not all, of the American and British battalions. The Canadian battalions came nowhere near the Australian battalion, French battalion and US Marines; they were surely the best." Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 125.

⁹Grey, *Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War*, 153.

"dissatisfaction with the consequences of Canadian practices led, in part, to [Major-General] West's decision in late November 1952" to give the Canadians their "own sector [of the *Jamestown* line], which did not vary. This removed the cause of complaints from the 28th [British Commonwealth] Brigade."¹⁰

A number of explanations have been posited to account for this lack of aggressiveness in the 25th Brigade. One is that the perennial shortage of infantry replacements precluded aggressive patrolling due to the inability of field units to absorb large numbers of casualties.¹¹ Although there is some truth in this, Major Pope did not think numbers were the primary cause of Canadian tactical difficulties in Korea. He wrote:

Our routine recce patrols and so-called fighting or ambush patrols would be engaged and defeated on our side of the valley by enemy forces of up to company size. Our static, night-time outposts would be raided or destroyed. Our reaction to this would either be to send stronger forces into the valley - but for some unaccountable reason never strong enough to defeat the enemy company - or be to withdraw our patrols and outposts and sit tight. Either technique was disastrous.¹²

Another explanation is that commanders believed that the peace talks at Panmunjom would eventually be successful, and wished to avoid risking the lives of their men in what

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War*, Volume II, 366.

¹²Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 2.

might be the last days of the war. As was shown in Chapter Four, some officers and men definitely had second thoughts about the necessity of sacrificing their lives for freedom and democracy in Korea shortly after their arrival in the Far East. However, it is important to remember that the men who served in the 25th Brigade were volunteers; from mid-1952 forward, they were regular soldiers from the Army Active Force. Recalling the casualty lists from the Second World War, they could have entertained few illusions about "the business end" of their profession when they enlisted. Moreover, according to Richard Holmes:

Professional soldiers are encouraged to think of themselves as servants of the state, whose task is to defend their country against its internal and external enemies. They are unlikely to inquire too closely into the nature of those enemies: indeed, for them to do so might introduce a potentially dangerous element of uncertainty.... Regular soldiers also share an intense professional curiosity as to how well their weapons, tactics and training will work in a real war. War is - and I mean this in no derogatory sense - the opportunity for them to apply what they have studied.¹³

In Korea, the Canadians were given the opportunity to test their weapons, tactics, and training against a real enemy and found them lacking. This, perhaps more than anything else, was behind any lack of aggression, or reluctance to close with the enemy. Major Pope himself hinted at this when he claimed that "our men knew the enemy patrols were specially trained for their jobs... whereas they themselves were simply out in the valley for a routine

¹³Holmes, *Firing Line*, 285, 286-287.

task...."¹⁴ Indeed, the promise of a cease fire from late 1951 on does not appear to have weakened Chinese resolve in the slightest.

This was not the first time that improper training, equipment, and tactics eroded the martial spirit of fighting men. Richard Fox clearly demonstrated that "common deficiencies in readiness for combat," and the resultant "diminished level of confidence," contributed to the US 7th Cavalry's defeat at the Little Bighorn.¹⁵ But unlike Custer's ill-fated command, the Canadians could, with decidedly mixed success, always substitute supporting fire for their tactical and technical shortcomings. On more than one occasion overwhelming supporting fire saved Canadian infantry units from their own "last stands." Still, from the perspective of the individual soldier who had to live and die with the consequences of improper training and weaponry, the desire to avoid contact with the enemy must have been great.

It is impossible to know how many Canadian patrols purposely avoided contact with the enemy. British sociologist Tony Ashworth documented this phenomenon on the First World War battlefield,¹⁶ and it is a well-known fact

¹⁴Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea, 9-10.

¹⁵Fox, *Archaeology, History, and Custer's Last Battle*, 260-274.

¹⁶See Ashworth, *Trench Warfare 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System*.

that US ground forces in Vietnam routinely avoided combat. In Korea, the Welsh Regiment was said to have a "live and let live" arrangement with the Chinese,¹⁷ on account of the socialist leanings of a large number of its enlisted men. There exists no comparable data for the 25th Brigade. Two Canadian veterans interviewed during the preparation of this work claimed to have been part of patrols who purposely avoided contact with the enemy.¹⁸ In both cases, the patrols went to ground a short distance from the Main Line of Resistance (MLR)¹⁹ and radioed false situation reports.

Although the available evidence strongly suggests that front line relations between enlisted men and their officers were good,²⁰ tensions must have run high in cases where there was a lack of unanimity on combat avoidance. Again, there are no recorded cases of "fragging" -- the practice of killing over-aggressive officers, which reached alarming proportions in Vietnam²¹ -- nor of outright mutiny in the 25th Brigade. Nevertheless, there is evidence "of the reluctance of some subordinate commanders to dispatch

¹⁷War Diary, 1 PPCLI, 11 March 1952.

¹⁸These men have, understandably, wished to remain anonymous.

¹⁹The main line of resistance, or MLR, was the ring of weapon pits on the forward slope of a defensive position.

²⁰This is clearly the impression that has emerged out of interviews with Korean veterans.

²¹Holmes, *Firing Line*, 329.

patrols."²² Such reluctance could have easily had its origins in the desire of a handful of enlisted men to avoid combat.

The avoidance of combat was not necessarily confined to patrols. There were several cases of Canadian soldiers feigning death and hiding in bunkers and during enemy raids. During the attack on Hill 355, for example, Lieutenant Gardner of patrolling fame, "played dead while the Chinese milled about the position."²³ So did a lightly wounded Private George Griffiths, who found himself cut off and alone in a Canadian communications trench. "I knew the Chinese were just above me, so I threw a couple of grenades and stumbled along until I came to a dead end, a bunker with a blanket across."²⁴ Griffiths climbed into it and hid among the four dead Canadians who lay sprawled across the floor. Moments later two Chinese soldiers entered the bunker, and began bayonetting the corpses. "But when they came to me," Griffiths recalled, "I turned and they realized I was alive. They motioned for me to drop my rifle, get my hands up, and get out of the bunker."²⁵

Self-preservation also appears to have been the primary

²²"Chinese Tactics and Lessons Learned," 4.

²³Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 209.

²⁴Private George Griffiths, Baker Company, 1 RCR, quoted in Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War*, 133.

²⁵*Ibid.*

objective of some senior Canadian officers in Korea. In a recent interview, Harry Pope claimed that "Many majors and lieutenant-colonels with Second World War experience were most concerned not to get themselves killed in a sideshow like Korea."²⁶ Along the *Jamestown* line, this meant minimizing one's exposure to hostile fire. The way to do this was by taking refuge in a deep bunker well behind the MLR or, if they were a battalion commander, to go on leave, as the 1 RCR's Lieutenant-Colonel Bingham did during the build-up to the attack on Hill 355.²⁷ Such behaviour set a poor example for their subordinates to follow, and accentuated the "sit-tight, and call for supporting fire" attitude amongst front line troops. Harry Pope again:

In truth, [the front line soldiers] were following the example of their platoon commander who was in his so-called command post - a bunker on the reverse slope, nice and safe, but utterly useless to control or even observe the battle. And the subaltern was merely following the example of his company commander who was fighting a map board and telephone war on *his* reverse slope one or two hills behind.²⁸

Major Pope was not the only one to voice dissatisfaction with some of his peers. Reflecting on his battalion's Korean experience, Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell of the 3 RCR said:

it was poor policy to post to 3 RCR as company

²⁶Pope, quoted in John Gardham, *Korea Volunteer*, 130.

²⁷War Diary, 1 RCR, 11 October 1952.

²⁸Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 3. Emphasis is Pope's.

commanders officers who had been company commanders during the Second World War... they had not progressed and in many cases lacked drive and enthusiasm. Even where they retained these important qualities, age and/or physical condition made them unsuitable... Company commanders must be fighting fit.

The young officers are 'pretty damn good.' But they could be better disciplined, particularly self disciplined and they are inclined to take the easy way out. They are not fully acquainted with the technical side of their profession. Patrolling skills have been neglected.²⁹

All this is not to say that there were no aggressive officers and men in the 25th Brigade. In every battalion there was that hard core of soldiers and junior officers who thrived on the intense thrill of combat. A handful of men even volunteered for patrol duty "to prove [themselves] and make a 'name' in the battalion."³⁰ According to Army Photographer Paul Tomelin, some junior officers cultivated a "macho image" that required periodic affirmation through aggressive behaviour and reckless courage.³¹ These men were, however, a minority. The vast majority of Canadian soldiers did what was required of them, nothing more nothing less, not wanting "to appear as cowards in the eyes of their comrades."³² This included killing the enemy.

²⁹"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 1-2.

³⁰Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 199.

³¹Sergeant Paul Tomelin, Canadian Army Photographer, interview, 12 August 1997.

³²Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 173.

THE EXPERIENCE OF COMBAT

The foregoing discussion should not cause us to lose sight of the fact that Canadian soldiers could kill with extreme aggression, especially when the enemy posed an immediate threat to the survival of their primary group. Such a perceived threat underlay the seemingly cold-blooded killing of group of Chinese soldiers in February 1951. The incident occurred when several enemy approached a 2 PPCLI platoon position in the middle of the night, apparently with the intention to surrender. Well aware of Chinese infiltration techniques, and not completely sure of their motives, a terrified Bren gunner emptied a full magazine into the Chinese soldiers killing them instantly.³³

Sometimes the tables were reversed. Only days after the Bren gun incident, a six-man Canadian patrol was caught in a Chinese ambush. Instead of patrolling *through* the bush, the point man led the patrol along a clearly marked path, right into the beaten zone of a Chinese machine-gun.³⁴ There were no survivors.

Assuming they survived the staccato of automatic weapons fire and explosions of hand grenades that initiated the ambush, there was only one thing for soldiers caught in

³³Anonymous soldier, 2 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996.

³⁴Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 76.

the "killing zone" to do: charge the enemy directly. Once the firing started, there was no time to ponder a course of action. The enemy had chosen the ground, and positioned their weapons to deliver the maximum amount of fire power into the killing zone. It therefore became essential to get out of it as quickly as possible, and the best way to do this was to get in amongst the ambushers. Here, of course, the Canadians were at a distinct disadvantage. Their unreliable Sten guns and single-shot Lee Enfields were hardly suited to close combat. Nor did their training emphasize the instant, aggressive, offensive action drills required in such circumstances.

A wiser course of action was to avoid being ambushed in the first place. To do this, soldiers had to become one with their surroundings. Their ears strained to pick up any sounds, such as the rustling of bushes or the metallic clang of a weapon's safety catch being disengaged, that portended imminent danger. They also listened to the wildlife. A soldier in the 3 PPCLI claimed that "when the crickets stopped chirping or a pheasant broke cover, there was trouble ahead."³⁵

The embargo on noise also applied to the Canadians. Patrols wore their noisy nylon winter suits and heavy combat boots at their peril. In the deafening silence of the

³⁵Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

Korean night, the squawk of a radio, the rattling of equipment, the unrestrained rupture of flatulence, or even a muffled sneeze could spell the difference between life and death. Lieutenant Bob Peacock reminisced that "the chronic dry cough" that "seemed to afflict everyone," was especially dangerous. "The only way it could be controlled on patrols," he wrote, "was to chew gum or candies or suck on a small stone to keep the throat moist."³⁶ However, not all Canadian soldiers were as concerned about noise as they should have been. Sergeant John Vallance recalled:

One night on patrol, while laying on the ground, I heard this clicking noise; I couldn't figure out what it was; I got a grenade ready. Then I saw this spurt of flame, and here he was, trying to light a cigarette with his lighter. I told him to put it out or I would jam it down his throat.³⁷

Sharp eyesight was equally critical. Eyes darted back and forth in their sockets, lizard like, scanning the patrol's axis of advance for the slightest movement or incongruous shape. Small trees and bushes always required a double-take: the Chinese were experts at camouflage and concealment. In such circumstances it was imperative to maintain one's night vision. This meant not looking at flares as they descended across the horizon, and using only filtered light to examine maps.

Towards the end of the war, the 25th Brigade was issued

³⁶Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 12.

³⁷Sergeant John Vallance, 3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 201.

with a very limited number of first generation night-vision devices known as "Snooper Scopes." These used infra-red to illuminate the dark recesses of no-man's land, but their effectiveness was undermined by mechanical failures. A post-war report noted that they "often went out of action just when most wanted. They were popular despite this."³⁸

A keen sense of smell was also useful. A 1 R22eR soldier claimed that it was possible to smell the enemy. "If you smelled onions or garlic you were guaranteed to have a contact," he recalled.³⁹ By the same token, the smell of Aqua Velva aftershave or soap could disclose the presence of a Canadian patrol.

In this environment of heightened sensory perception, patrol dogs were "worth their weight in gold."⁴⁰ Dogs had been used by both sides during the First World War, but the Canadian Army never established its own canine corps. In Korea, patrol dogs were used exclusively by the third battalions, and only then, during the last month of the war. As Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell noted, patrol dogs "allowed the patrol to move with much more dash as the possibility of ambush was almost eliminated."⁴¹ "Almost" was the operative

³⁸"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 12.

³⁹Anonymous soldier, 1 R22eR, interview, Hull, Quebec, 14 July 1997.

⁴⁰"Summary of Experiences - 3 R22eR," 7.

⁴¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 12.

term, for "the most famous patrol dog"⁴² in the Commonwealth Division, a female German Shepherd named "Killer," was killed in an ambush while accompanying a Canadian patrol.

The 3 RCR War Diary recorded:

Sgt Walker's patrol was ambushed and Pte Aspen was WIA [Wounded in Action]. Patrol Commander, Sgt Walker and 2 [British] dog handlers MIA [Missing in Action] and Cpl Doherty KIA [Killed in Action]... The patrol dog "Killer" was KIA and her body was brought in from the area of the action.⁴³

Another way to avoid ambushes was by not following a set routine. In theory, Canadian patrols should have gone out at different times of the day and used different routes. The only place the Chinese would lay an ambush was along a recognizable track; there was no point to lying in wait in an overgrown area of no-man's land. Avoiding a fixed routine was, however, extremely difficult along the Jamestown line. Major Harry Pope wrote:

The enemy wished to fight at night: very well, we would do the same. It never occurred to us that the reason the enemy preferred night-fighting was the very reason we should have preferred day-fighting. But no, we forbade all day-time movement and let the enemy do whatever he pleased in the dead ground of our forward slopes. If each forward company commander had made weekly daylight reces of his forward slope, under cover of our guns or aircraft, we would never have been surprised.⁴⁴

If Canadian patrols only went out at more or less the same time each day, they also used the same well-worn

⁴²Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 213.

⁴³War Diary, 3 RCR, 12-13 July 1953.

⁴⁴Pope, "Infantry Patrolling In Korea," 3.

routes. The thick minefields that skirted the Canadians' positions channelled movement, as patrols could only pass through them at specially marked gaps.⁴⁵ It did not take long before the Chinese caught on to this, and laid ambushes there.

Chinese ambushes were not the only danger that lurked around minefield gaps. Errant mines were also a problem. These might be planted by enemy sappers who made a habit out of digging-up Canadian mines and re-laying them. Mines might also work their way into the gap following a heavy rain, or be inaccurately marked on the minefield map. Either way, the consequences were the same. For example, only six days before the cease fire a Canadian soldier was killed and three KATCOMs wounded after one of them accidentally stepped on an anti-personnel mine known as a "Bouncing Betty."⁴⁶ A similar accident claimed the life of a young platoon commander in the 2 PPCLI. Lieutenant Brian Munro recalled:

He stepped into the minefield by mistake. He was stripped clean, from his pelvic area down, totally devoid of flesh and muscle, or anything else. We called for a helicopter; he was still alive when we loaded him aboard. He died before he reached the hospital.⁴⁷

Booby traps were another constant worry. One type

⁴⁵Pope, "Infantry Defences in Korea," 7.

⁴⁶War Diary, 3 RCR, 21 July 1953.

⁴⁷Lieutenant Brian Munro, 2 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 307.

favoured by the Chinese was the so-called "mud bomb." It was made by covering a Soviet-pattern F-1 fragmentation grenade in a thick layer of mud, until only the pull ring was exposed. Once it had dried, the ring was pulled. So long as the mud remained unbroken, it held the detonating lever in place and prevented the grenade from exploding. In the words of an intelligence summary, "this is an effective and inconspicuous anti-personnel mine when laid in paths where it is liable to be stepped on or kicked."⁴⁸

Whether a booby trap was safely side-stepped or triggered often depended on the alertness of its intended victim. Alertness was, however, eroded by the mind-numbing fatigue that was such a feature of the Canadian soldier's combat experience in Korea. Whether they were attacking a Chinese-held hill, patrolling, or manning defensive positions, Canadian soldiers almost always went into combat tired. The 2 PPCLI soldiers from Dog Company who attacked up the treacherous slopes of Hill 532 were so exhausted and disorganized by the time they reached the first line of Chinese defences that Lieutenant-Colonel Stone ordered them to fall back *before* they had even reached their objective.⁴⁹

Things were little better at Kap'yong. After a two mile march from Tungmudae to the base of Hill 677, the rifle companies had to hike to their positions on the hill itself.

⁴⁸War Diary, 1 RCR, August 1952, Appendix "J".

⁴⁹War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 7 March 1951.

The climb up Hill 677 is difficult enough when equipped only with a camera, as this author discovered during a research visit to Kap'yong, let alone a rifle, several hundred rounds of .303 SAA,⁵⁰ grenades, an entrenching tool, full water bottle, and 24 hour field ration pack. To make matters worse, many in the battalion were nursing wicked hangovers, as the night before had been spent clustered around bon fires imbibing bottles of Labatt's lager.⁵¹ On reaching their allotted positions, the soldiers of 2 PPCLI still had to dig defensive positions, lay signal wire and trip flares, and clear fields of fire through the dense under brush.

Combat was an equally exhausting experience after the consolidation of the *Jamestown* line. Trench routine (see Chapter Ten) provided limited opportunities for soldiers to maintain their physical fitness, particularly cardiovascular fitness, yet they were still expected to be fighting fit for patrol duty. This could cause problems, as a 1 RCR fighting patrol discovered:

The patrol found difficulty keeping up with the timed tank-fire program because of the state of fitness of the men and the speed of movement across the valley. The patrol covered the 800 yards across the valley in darkness in under 20 minutes.⁵²

⁵⁰Small-arms ammunition.

⁵¹Corporal George Cook, 2 PPCLI, interview, 24 June 1994.

⁵²"Preliminary Report on 1 RCR Fighting Patrol, Night 31 May/1 June 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, May 1952, Appendix 4, 2.

The return trek could be equally harrowing, especially if trailed by the enemy or carrying a wounded man. Even if unmolested, the climb back up to friendly lines was a heart-wrenching affair, as lungs gasped for breath and legs heavy with fatigue struggled for balance. The sheer physical effort required just to make it safely up the slopes leading to the Canadians' positions often meant that "caution gave way to a thumping urge for haste."⁵³ As seen above, this could have tragic consequences as the patrol approached the minefield gap.

Repelling a Chinese assault was even more exhausting. Few men were able to relax while shells slammed into their positions, and a prolonged bombardment often meant that they were already exhausted before the battle even began. But this was only the beginning of their ordeal. Once the shelling stopped, and assuming they did not sit tight and call down supporting fire, the race to the forward fighting trenches was on. The entrances to the Canadians' bunkers were usually choked with debris, making an easy exit impossible. Next came the thirty or so yard dash over more rubble to the forward fighting trenches, which were usually destroyed or caved in.⁵⁴ Now came the real work. Cycling the bolts of their single-shot rifles like men possessed and hoping for the best, the Canadians attempted to pour fire

⁵³Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 201.

⁵⁴"Report On 1 RCR Action Night 23/24 October 1952," 5.

into the attacking Chinese ranks. This was far easier said than done, and it was only a matter of time before "friendly" supporting fire was brought down on the position itself. Commenting on the Chinese raid on 3 RCR, Corporal W.D. Pero recalled:

The Chinese were hard to hit with small arms fire... You had to lean way out of the trenches to bring a weapon to bear on them. I finally had no choice but to call VT artillery on top of our position. All we could do was find shelter in a bunker, or lie on the floor of a trench. The VT fire caused many casualties to the Chinese; it killed some of our boys also.⁵⁵

The extensive use of supporting fire reduced, but did not eliminate completely, hand-to-hand encounters between Canadian and Chinese soldiers. During the attack on Hill 355, for example, a Canadian soldier killed a Chinese grenadier with an entrenching tool as he came around the corner of a narrow communications trench.⁵⁶ There was also a hand-to-hand melee during the Battle of Kap'yong. A Baker Company soldier recalled:

Lieutenant Ross gave us the order to move out. Just as I jumped up... I fell over a Chinaman who was running up the side of the hill. He let fly and got me in the neck then ran into the end of my bayonet.... I met [Wayne] Mitchell later in hospital. He knew my rifle because I had a couple of notches carved in it. He had gone back the next day and found it. He told me, 'You got him. The rifle was still in him.'⁵⁷

One of the more frightening close quarters

⁵⁵Corporal W.D. Pero, 3 RCR, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 237.

⁵⁶Anonymous soldier, 1 RCR, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁵⁷"Kap'yong Remembered," 24.

confrontations occurred during the earlier attack on Hill 532. As he struggled up the hill, a Dog Company platoon commander came face to face with a Chinese soldier as he emerged from a concealed position. Armed with a captured American rifle, the Chinese soldier fired but missed.⁵⁸ He attempted to fire again but his rifle jammed. The Canadian raised his pistol to fire, but his mud-caked weapon would not work either. With less than ten yards between them, both men struggled frantically to clear their weapons in a macabre race to the death. The young Canadian officer managed to bring his weapon back into action first. He recounted what happened next:

I was so frightened that I let go eight rounds before I realized he was falling forward. I reloaded my magazine. To go forward up the trench, I had to crawl over him. There was not much evidence of his wounds, just a row of white puffs on the back of his quilted winter uniform showed where the bullets had come out. I will never forget that experience of crawling over a still warm body.⁵⁹

This encounter underlines another aspect of the combat experience in Korea: fear. As Richard Holmes reminded us, "fear is the common bond between fighting men," and takes a variety of forms.⁶⁰ Some men channelled it, as the young officer above did, into action, while others became withdrawn and sheepish. Others still became agitated and

⁵⁸Lieutenant Rod Middleton, 2 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 13 October 1994.

⁵⁹Middleton, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 77.

⁶⁰Holmes, *Firing Line*, 204.

pugnacious.

Fear had other manifestations. One soldier ruefully remarked that the best way to gauge fear was according to the "pucker factor. The more your asshole puckered up, the more frightened you were. It gave a whole different meaning to being scared shitless."⁶¹ More scientifically, a 1952 study of blood and urine samples taken from American soldiers shortly after being exposed to enemy fire, "disclosed definite physiological changes occurring as a result of combat."⁶² Such changes included interference with the body's diurnal cycle, or "internal clock,"⁶³ often making men hungrier and thirstier than they normally were. A Kap'yong survivor remembered the fear-induced appetite of one of his comrades:

He had a metabolism like you wouldn't believe. We were issued two rations, two C rations per man. Bishop sat down on the edge of his trench and ate two C rations. There were three meals in each one. Then he went around seeing if anyone had any old ham and lima beans they didn't need.⁶⁴

Just as the symptoms of fear varied from individual to individual, so did its causes. Some men experienced a surge

⁶¹Corporal Bill Martin, 54th Transport Company, interview, 22 August 1996.

⁶²"Lessons Learned: Operations Research Office John Hopkins University," UNC/CFC/USFK and EUSA Command History Office, Yongsan Garrison, Seoul, Republic of Korea, file 870-5a-220.515, 3.

⁶³Ibid., 124.

⁶⁴"Kap'yong Remembered," 28.

of fear at the sound of a bugle or shepherd's horn being blown. The Chinese used them for battlefield communications and to "demoralize" the enemy. However, in the words of an intelligence report, "Chinese Communist battle noises... are effective on morale only to the extent that UN troops are not conditioned to expect them."⁶⁵

Far more ominous was enemy weaponry. According to a 1951 American study of ineffective soldier performance under fire in Korea, "mortars and combinations of automatic infantry weapons," including the PPSH-41, were the most frightening.⁶⁶ With the advent of static war, artillery surpassed both as the leading fear-inducer among UN infantrymen, especially when large numbers of shells fell over a prolonged period of time.

Reflecting on his experiences under enemy shell fire, a Canadian soldier commented that "he was very fucking lucky not to have his head and balls blown off."⁶⁷ As we shall see next chapter, there was more than a little truth to this. But it was not only the body that could be destroyed by shell fire; the mind was, arguably, even more vulnerable to the effects of an enemy bombardment. The blood-curdling

⁶⁵"Noise as a Chinese Communist Weapon, February 1951," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 1.

⁶⁶"A Study of Ineffective Soldier Performance Under Fire in Korea, 1951," Yongsan Garrison, file 870-5a-220.515, 3.

⁶⁷Corporal R.W. Granville, B Squadron, LDSH, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

whine of shells as they descended along their banana-shaped trajectory, the rumbling of earth as it was churned by high-explosive, the ringing in the ears punctuated by the sounds of more explosions and the screams of frightened men, all conspired to make shelling a terrible ordeal indeed; an ordeal made even worse by the Canadian practice of counting shells⁶⁸ for the "shellrep," a daily tabulation of incoming fire maintained by each infantry battalion.⁶⁹

Completing this vision of hell on earth was the dark, dank, dusty, claustrophobic bunkers in which the men sheltered. There can be few things more frightening and demoralizing than counting incoming rounds, each one with your name on it, crouched in the sinister shadows of a flickering candle, lungs screaming for oxygen as the walls draw ever closer, while high-explosive shells re-arrange the topography of your hilltop warren. Few men endured this agony without reaching the very limits of their emotional endurance. In the words of a senior RCR Regimental Officer, "It's knowing that you can't walk around or you'll get hit. It gets so that even when there is no shelling at all you still get nervous. And when they pour in 1,275 shells a day you've got a problem. The odd man breaks and then you risk

⁶⁸Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, Volume II*, 276.

⁶⁹The After Action Report for the Battle of Hill 355, for example, records a total of 1,466 incoming rounds for the period 17-20 October. See "Report On 1 RCR Action Night 23/24 October 1952," 1.

getting a run for it."⁷⁰

That all men did not "break" and make "a run for it" is the truly astonishing aspect of the Canadian combat experience in Korea. As the British Official Historian observed, endurance in such extreme conditions depended on,

the ability of the men to accept the abiding dangers and discomforts of the battlefield so distant from their families for a variety of reasons unique to individual, ranging for most among such factors as comradeship, a spirit of adventure, and some sort of belief in the cause.⁷¹

Yet, it was inevitable that some soldiers, no matter how strong their ties of comradeship or "spirit of adventure," would give way under the strain of battle. These were the so-called "Exhaustion" cases, the men who suffered acute neuro-psychiatric breakdown "due to exposure to battle conditions."⁷² Then there were the "SIWs," the men who resorted to the traditional battlefield expedient of a self-inflicted wound as a way out of their horrible predicament. The boundary between the two was anything but firm, and many of the "SIWs" would have eventually been diagnosed as exhaustion cases. The differences between the two are, in any event, more apparent than real: both saw the ugly face

⁷⁰Senior Regimental Officer, RCR. quoted in Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, Volume Two*, 276.

⁷¹Farrar-Hockley, *The British Part in the Korean War, Volume II*, 365.

⁷²"British Commonwealth Classification of Wounds," War Diary, No. 25 Canadian Field Dressing Station, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,396, July 1952.

of battle and were unable to come to terms with its diabolical visage.

"EXHAUSTION" AND "SIWs"

As was intimated above, intense and prolonged "enemy artillery activity" was behind most battle exhaustion cases in Korea.⁷³ During the "softening up" phase of the Battle of Hill 355, for example, 11 men were evacuated for neuro-psychiatric breakdown.⁷⁴ Although Hill 355 was responsible for the largest proportion of Canadian exhaustion cases during the Korean War, they amounted to less than one percent of the total casualties suffered by the 1 RCR during the month-long action.⁷⁵

During the 2 PPCLI's first month in action, a period which included the disastrous attack on Hill 532, there were only two cases.⁷⁶ A Baker Company soldier recalled:

One guy shot two [enemy] with startling accuracy. It

⁷³"Monthly Psychiatric Report - September 1952," 1.

⁷⁴"Monthly Report, Battle Adjutant 1 RCR, 1-31 October 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, October 1952, Appendix 7. This figure does not include the five men evacuated to "A" Echelon with anxiety state, a mild, temporary, psychological reaction to stress.

⁷⁵"Monthly Report, Battle Adjutant 1 RCR, 1-31 October 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,338, October 1952, Appendix 7.

⁷⁶"Statistics - Korea, 20 March 1951," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/048, box 977, file 3105-151/25, Personnel Stats, CASF, 1951-1953, 1.

was a classic down on one knee, bang, bang, and that was it. Then he went completely out of his mind and ran hysterically down the hill to [Major] Lilley. I never saw him again.⁷⁷

According to a post-war medical report, "battle exhaustion did not occur to any great extent [because] battles were of short duration and the fatigue factor was not operative."⁷⁸ There were exceptions to this, such as Hill 355, but on the whole battle exhaustion was not a major problem in Korea. Yet, there is evidence that the Canadians had a higher rate of neuro-psychiatric breakdown than the British.⁷⁹ However, as the Canadian Adjutant-General pointed out:

the British practically ignore what we term battle exhaustion. It may well be that our doctors are so anxious to avoid retaining a man in action if he is in fact suffering from battle exhaustion that they may withdraw a substantial number of men who are not in fact suffering from nervous disorders at all.⁸⁰

There is also evidence that the Australians and New

⁷⁷"Kap'yong Remembered," 11.

⁷⁸Brigadier K.A. Hunter and Colonel J.E. Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," DHist, file 147.013(D4), 9.

⁷⁹J.W. Bishop, Acting Adjutant-General to Brigadier W.L. Coke, Director General of Medical Services, 11 October 1951, NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84, box 5210, file 3701-151/25, Part 2, Medical Arrangements - CASF - 1951-1953.

⁸⁰Bishop to Coke, 11 October 1951. The seemingly high number of Canadian battle exhaustion casualties may have also been a reflection of the practice of repatriating cases directly to Canada at this time rather than retaining them in a support capacity as had been the case during the Second World War.

Zealanders had a higher proportion of battle exhaustion casualties than the Canadians.⁸¹ The contradictory nature of the available evidence, therefore, makes it impossible to assess the relative rates of battle exhaustion in each Commonwealth formation. Even if firm statistics were available for each contingent, as they are for venereal disease, it would still be impossible to reach any reliable conclusions. For, unlike VD, a diagnosis of battle exhaustion was far more subjective, and dependant on the attitude of the attending physician towards psychiatric illnesses in general. Indeed, Sergeant Paul Tomelin recalled that although Canadian battle exhaustion "cases in Italy and the Netherlands were much more severe... those suffering from battle exhaustion were treated more compassionately than those in Korea."⁸²

Having said this, treatment of battle exhaustion was the same as it had been during the Second World War.⁸³ Men showing its symptoms, anything from paralysis and uncontrollable shaking to total hysteria,⁸⁴ were evacuated to the Regimental Aid Post just behind the MLR. "Those with slight or no disability were returned directly to duty,"

⁸¹"Monthly Psychiatric Report - September 1952," 1.

⁸²Sergeant Paul Tomelin, Canadian Army Photographer, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁸³See Copp and McAndrew, *Battle Exhaustion*.

⁸⁴Holmes, *Firing Line*, 265-269.

while the more severe cases were sent along the evacuation chain (see Chapter Eight) to the Field Dressing Station, where they were sedated and given short term psychotherapy.⁸⁵ Most cases were returned to their units after a few days, while more severe cases were re-assigned to support units or even sent home.

This method of treatment revolved around the proven principles of immediacy, proximity, and expectancy.⁸⁶ By treating cases in a timely fashion as close to the fighting as possible, and always under the assumption that they would return to duty, the number of recoveries was maximized and "the factor of gain through illness" minimized.⁸⁷ This is not to say that some men did not feign a neuro-psychiatric breakdown as a way out of the combat zone. However, there were very specific taboos attached to this behaviour. A psychiatric report penned just after the cease-fire recorded:

Now there is no longer any shame or social disapproval attached to evacuation from Korea - Thus the soldier who would otherwise be held to his post by fear of appearing a "coward" should he be removed psychiatrically can now cheerfully accept this consequence... it is now acceptable amongst a certain class to strive to attain such a disposal to the more congenial surroundings of Japan - and posting to that country (or better still to home) would be regarded as

⁸⁵Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 9.

⁸⁶Holmes, *Firing Line*, 258.

⁸⁷Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 9.

a mark of achievement.⁸⁸

Another, arguably more effective, way to remove oneself from the combat zone was a SIW. Most of the 25th Brigade's medical records remain classified, so it is impossible to know the incidence of SIWs in Korea. Having said this, no Canadian soldiers were court martialled for SIWs in Korea.⁸⁹ As a Commonwealth Division report noted, "it was difficult to prove negligence in [self-inflicted] wounds owing to the difficulty of obtaining witnesses."⁹⁰ This dovetails with the anecdotal evidence, which generally suggests that most SIWs occurred during lulls in the fighting when soldiers "mistakenly" shot themselves in the foot or hand while cleaning their rifles in a forward weapons pit, or a lonely corner of communications trench. The one *bona fide* 1 RCR SIW on Hill 355, for example, occurred during a lull in the shelling, when a young Bren gunner turned his LMG on his left foot.⁹¹ Commenting on the experience in his battalion,

⁸⁸"Monthly Psychiatric Report - August 1953," War Diary, No. 25 FDS, September 1953, 1-2.

⁸⁹"Courts Martial in Korea, 1951-1954," Judge Advocate General, Court Martial Charge Cards and Court Martial Ledger, "Korea," kindly supplied to the author by Dr. Chris Madsen.

⁹⁰Miscellaneous Adjutant-General file, 1 Commonwealth Division, no date, WO 216/515, 3.

⁹¹"Monthly Report, Battle Adjutant 1 RCR, 1-31 October 1952," 6. Although there was officially only one SIW in the battalion during this time, there is reason to believe that there were at least three others. All involved gun-shot wounds to the hands or legs.

1 PPCLI's Sergeant John Richardson recalled:

There were five or six [SIWs] in the battalion. I only recall one in [Dog] Company, a replacement; he shot himself in the foot, with the boot off, while cleaning his rifle. No witnesses. We gave him a rough ride on the stretcher going back to the Regimental Aid Post. This incident happened at a very quiet time and there were no physical hardships involved....⁹²

Before the arrival of a "completely Canadian medical organization" in Korea (see Chapter Eight), the 25th Brigade faced the additional problem of disciplining cases of SIWs.⁹³ An Adjutant-Generals report noted:

SIWs are on the increase in Korea but it is impossible to apply the only deterrent, disciplinary action. This is due to the fact that such cases are evacuated to US medical installations and the opportunity to lay and pursue the necessary charges is lost.⁹⁴

With the arrival of the No. 25 Canadian Field Ambulance in Korea and the formation of the Commonwealth Division, it became easier to identify SIW cases. However, this did not necessarily translate into increased disciplinary action. During a visit to the Commonwealth General Hospital in Japan, the British Director General of Army Medical Services was disheartened to discover that of the 83 soldiers undergoing treatment for wounds, 24 (14 British, 6 Canadian, 1 Australian, and 3 New Zealand) were

⁹²Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 322.

⁹³"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel D.S.F. Bult-Francis, AG Rep On AHQ Team, On Visit to Japan and Korea, 2 July - 4 August 1951," DHist, filr 112.009(D87), 11.

⁹⁴"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel Bult-Francis," 11.

"accidental" gun-shot wounds to the hands or feet."⁹⁵

However, the New Zealanders had the highest rate of SIWs. A whopping 75 percent of their admissions were for SIWs, followed by the British (38 percent), the Canadians (18 percent), and the Australians (17 percent).⁹⁶ Commenting on these disheartening, but highly irregular,⁹⁷ figures, he wrote:

I saw no soldier under arrest for any of these [SIWs], and I consider it is bad for morale for those who are wounded due to enemy action to see their comrades in the same ward with self-inflicted wounds being treated on an equal footing. I feel that instructions should be given that all [SIWs] should be treated in a special ward in hospital until it has been proved beyond that the self-infliction was not deliberate.⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

Despite the recommendations of the British Medical Officer, SIWs continued to be treated alongside their comrades who were wounded by enemy fire. The impact this had on morale is questionable, as men with SIWs were most

⁹⁵Miscellaneous Adjutant-General file, 1 Commonwealth Division, WO 216/515, 1.

⁹⁶Miscellaneous Adjutant-General Report, 1 Commonwealth Division, 2-3.

⁹⁷The available Canadian casualty lists clearly do not support the conclusion that 18 percent of all wounds were self-inflicted.

⁹⁸Miscellaneous Adjutant-General Report, 1 Commonwealth Division, 2-3.

certainly viewed as cowards, or "lead-swingers," by their fellow soldiers."⁹ As we have seen, however, cowardice, battle exhaustion, and SIWs were anything but synonymous in Korea. Indeed, the available evidence strongly suggests a reduced will to combat in the 25th Brigade. Yet, the vast majority of Canadian fighting men soldiered on in spite of their very serious training and equipment deficiencies, and resultant lacklustre battlefield performance. That even more men did not succumb to battle exhaustion or resort to self-inflicted wounds is then, perhaps the most astonishing aspect of the Canadian combat experience in Korea -- an experience that was made even more taxing when soldiers realized that their comrades were being killed and wounded.

⁹25th Brigade vernacular for a shirker or coward.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CASUALTIES

By World War standards, Canadian casualties in Korea were extremely light. In only eight hours of fighting at Dieppe, for example, the Canadian Army suffered more than twice as many casualties as it did in the entire Korean War.¹ This was little consolation to the soldiers of the 25th Brigade who faced death and mutilation on a daily basis. For although the numbers of wounded were far smaller in Korea, the dangers were universal. Men could be cut in half by machine-gun fire, eviscerated by shell fragments, or burned beyond recognition just as surly in the Korean "police action" as they had in the World Wars. The Korean War did, however, mark the battlefield debut of two medical/technical innovations: the medevac helicopter and protective body armour. Unfortunately, the limited availability of these American-designed and manufactured items prevented their having a major impact on the Canadian casualty experience in Korea.

BATTLE CASUALTIES

Battle casualties are sustained through direct enemy action, and are distinct from psychological and accidental

¹"Casualty Statement, 5 December 1952."

casualties. Soldiers who were killed in action (KIA), officially presumed dead, died of wounds (DOW), wounded in action (WIA), injured in action, missing², or captured as prisoners of war (POWs) were considered battle casualties.

The butcher's bill was highest in the infantry. Of the 1,543 Canadian battle casualties in Korea only 101, or less than ten percent, were from non-infantry units.³ A similar pattern emerges in regards to fatal casualties. Of the 309 KIAs, DOWs or officially presumed dead, only 15 were from non-infantry units, the majority of these (nine) being in the artillery.⁴ Clearly, the infantry bore the brunt of the fighting and dying in Korea.

Table 7.1: Fatal Battle Casualties⁵

<u>Unit</u>	<u>KIA</u>	<u>Presumed Dead</u>	<u>DOW</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1 RCR	40	3	8	51
2 PPCLI	40	1	9	50
2 R22eR	31	-	4	35
3 RCR	26	4	5	35
1 PPCLI	27	2	5	34

²No Canadian soldiers are listed as "Missing" in Korea.

³"Statistical Report on Battle Casualties (Far East), 4 February 1955," NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,502, file 133.(D4).

⁴"Canadian Army, Fatal Casualties - Korean War," DHist, file 79/704.

⁵"Statistical Report on Battle Casualties (Far East), 4 February 1955," NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,502, file 133.(D4).

				259
1 R22eR	27	3	3	33
2 RCR	30	-	1	31
3 PPCLI	18	-	-	18
3 R22eR	4	2	-	6
Totals:	243	15	35	293⁶

The 1 RCR and the 2 PPCLI lost the most men, with 51 and 50 fatal battle casualties respectively. Approximately 38 of the 51 1 RCR battle fatalities, or 70 percent, occurred in October 1952 while the battalion occupied positions atop Hill 355.⁷ The 2 PPCLI, on the other hand, suffered 33 battle fatalities during the first three months of its operational service in Korea.⁸ The fluid nature of the fighting at this time, and the attendant difficulty of evacuating casualties over difficult terrain, is reflected in the comparatively high number of deaths from wounds. Finally, it is worth noting that 16, or nearly half, of the 2 R22eR's fatal casualties were sustained during the

⁶The Official Historian puts the number of fatal battle casualties in the infantry at 294. However, DND has recently changed the nature of Lance-Corporal Glen Small's death from "Killed in Action," to "Accidentally Killed" -- hence the statistical discrepancy.

⁷"Monthly Report, Battle Adjutant 1 RCR, 1-31 October 1952," War Diary, 1 RCR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,338, October 1952, Appendix 7.

⁸"Canadian Army, Fatal Casualties - Korean War."

battalions's two-day defence of Hill 227. Obviously, a set-piece engagement could have a drastic impact on a unit's casualty rate.

With the truce being signed during their Far Eastern tours, the third battalions generally suffered a lower number of fatal battle casualties. There is, however, one important exception. It will be remembered that the 3 PPCLI arrived in Korea five months before the 3 RCR and six months before the 3 R22eR. However, it was not the 3 PPCLI but the 3 RCR that experienced the worst blood-letting. What the statistics do not tell us is that 26,⁹ or 74 percent, of the battalion's battle fatalities were suffered by *one company* during the attack against Hill 187 on 2-3 May 1953.¹⁰

Table 7.2: Non-fatal Battle Casualties¹¹

<u>Unit</u>	<u>WIA</u>	<u>Injured</u>	<u>POWs¹²</u>	<u>Totals</u>
1 RCR	204	13	14	231
1 PPCLI	178	25	-	203
2 PPCLI	141	22	-	163
2 R22eR	136	9	3	148
2 RCR	134	10	-	144

⁹This figure does not include the four KATCOM soldiers attached to the 3 RCR who were also killed.

¹⁰"Statistical Report on Battle Casualties (Far East)"; Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 236.

¹¹"Statistical Report on Battle Casualties (Far East)."

¹²All Canadian POWs were returned.

				261
1 R22eR	84	6	1	91
3 RCR	71	1	7	79
3 PPCLI	61	7	1	69
3 R22eR	17	-	4	21
Totals:	1,026	93	30	1,149

The distribution of non-fatal battle casualties by battalion was similar to fatal ones. Indeed, with the exception of 3 RCR's and 1 PPCLI's altered positions, the order of units was more or less the same. While the 3 RCR ranked fourth in fatalities, only the 3 PPCLI and the 3 R22eR had fewer non-fatal battle casualties. Conversely, the 1 PPCLI ranked fifth in fatalities but had the second highest number of non-fatal battle casualties. It is not clear why this should be the case. A possible explanation would include the high number of non-fatal casualties suffered by the 1 PPCLI (and the 1 RCR) in May-June 1952 when the battalion "patrolled vigorously in conformity with a [raiding] policy laid down by" the UN Command.¹³ The relatively high proportion of fatal to non-fatal battle casualties in the 3 RCR, on the other hand, can largely be attributed to the unusually high number of killed to wounded during the attack on 2-3 May 1953: 26 men were killed and 27

¹³Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 185.

wounded.¹⁴ Put another way, for every soldier who was wounded another was killed.

POWs were also counted among the non-fatal battle casualties. The experiences of Canadian POWs in Korea are relatively well-documented and need not detain us here.¹⁵ Nevertheless, several observations are in order. The figures once again reflect the 1 RCR's and the 3 RCR's unhappy experiences on Hills 355 and 97 respectively: all of the RCR POWs in the Korean War were captured during these two engagements.¹⁶ Similarly, all three 2 R22eR POWs were lost on 24 November 1951.¹⁷ Three of the four 3 R22eR POWs, meanwhile, were lost to the enemy on 20 May 1953, and the fourth during a patrol clash on 22 June 1953. The only other battalions to have men captured were the 3 PPCLI and the 1 R22eR, losing one man a piece. Lance-Corporal Paul Dugal, the 1 R22eR POW, was captured in June 1952 during a routine patrol in no-man's land. As with all of the other Canadian soldiers captured during the Korean War, Lance-Corporal Dugal survived his stint in a Chinese prison camp.

¹⁴Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 236. The seven RCR POWs are not included.

¹⁵See Johnathan Vance, *Objects of Concern: Canadian Prisoners of War Through the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1994), 229-237.

¹⁶"Prisoners of War - Korea," DHist, file 410B25.065(D9).

¹⁷"Prisoners of War - Korea."

He was released from captivity in April 1953.¹⁸

From the information presented above, excluding the POWs, it is possible to calculate the ratio of fatal to non-fatal battle casualties in the 25th Brigade during the Korean War. The number killed or dying of wounds was 293 out of 1,412, or approximately 21 percent of all wounded. In other words, there was one death for each five wounded in the 25th Brigade. This corresponds exactly with the figure for the Second World War;¹⁹ clearly, the fighting in Korea was far more lethal than the euphemism "police action" suggests.

Although the ratio of killed to wounded remained constant throughout the Korean War,²⁰ the percentage of casualties by weapon appears to have changed. A 25th Brigade report released in December 1951 identified bullets as responsible for 33 percent of all battle casualties in Korea, shell wounds 52 percent, and "other" (mines, grenades, edged weapons, etc.) for 15 percent.²¹ The percentage of gun-shot wounds (GSW) is probably low, as it

¹⁸"Prisoners of War - Korea," 1.

¹⁹"Preliminary Report On Battle Casualties of 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade, 5 December 1951," DHist, file 410B25.065(D1), 2.

²⁰The ratio of killed to wounded was found to be one to five during the first ten months of the Korean War as well. See "Preliminary Report On Battle Casualties of 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade," 2.

²¹"Preliminary Report On Battle Casualties of 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade," 2.

includes casualties from October and November 1951 when heavy fighting erupted along the newly consolidated Jamestown line. This period coincided with the Canadians' first real taste of the destructive potential of enemy heavy artillery. The casualty list from the 2 R22eR action of 23-25 November, for example, records only one GSW in the entire battalion. The circumstances surrounding this lone GSW are hazy, although the nature and location of the wound, a .303 rifle bullet through the right foot, suggest a self-inflicted wound.²² All of the 2 R22eR's other 62 casualties, including the 16 fatalities, were caused by shell or mortar fire.

One of the most upsetting direct hits of the War occurred at this time. Three "Vandoo" Privates were clustered around a small hexamine fire in front of their dugout cooking lunch and enjoying a brief respite from the fighting. Sergeant Paul Tomelin, a Canadian Army Photographer on assignment with the 2 R22eR, stopped to chat with them.²³ Pressed for time, Tomelin declined their offer of lunch and continued with his work. No sooner had he left the scene than a Chinese shell exploded right on top of the three men. When the smoke cleared nothing remained of

²²"Casualty List for the Period 23 to 27 November 1951," War Diary, 2 R22eR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,357, November 1951.

²³Sergeant Paul Tomelin, Canadian Army Photographer, interview, Kelowna, BC, 12 August 1997.

them, leading the Battalion Adjutant to list them as "Missing - Presumed Dead," until enough eye-witnesses could be assembled to confirm their fate.²⁴

As the 2 R22eR casualty statistics suggest, the occupation of defensive positions and the attendant increase in enemy artillery fire was accompanied by a relative decrease in the number of GSWs in the 25th Brigade. An official breakdown of casualties by weapons is not available for the period December 1951 to July 1953; however, an examination of the 1 RCR casualty for October 1952 yields some valuable clues.

The 1 RCR suffered 38 killed and approximately 114²⁵ wounded during this period. Only two of the fatalities can be attributed to GSWs, with both occurring during the Chinese infantry assault against Baker company on the night of 23-24 October.²⁶ One soldier was cut in half by a series of "burp gun" hits which stitched across his upper torso from his left scapula to his right shoulder, while another took a burst in the face.²⁷ The remaining 36 RCR fatalities, or 95 percent, were caused by shell or mortar fire. Some of

²⁴"Casualty List for the period 23-27 November 1951," 3; Sergeant Paul Tomelin, Canadian Army Photographer, interview, 12 August 1997.

²⁵This figure does not include psychiatric or KSC casualties.

²⁶"Monthly Report, 1 RAP RCR," 1 RCR, War Diary, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,338, October 1952.

²⁷"Korea: Canada's Forgotten War," *The War Amps*, 1991.

the bodies were mutilated beyond recognition. On 2 October, for example, a soldier was killed after sustaining multiple fragment wounds from a high-explosive shell. The man suffered abdominal evisceration, complete destruction of the frontal cranium, and a shattered right femur.²⁸ Most of his clothing was torn off by the blast. It was only after his identity tags were recovered that he was positively identified as KIA.

Artillery was also responsible for most of the RCR wounded. Of the approximately 114 non-fatal battle casualties, only 11 -- or ten percent -- were officially listed as GSWs.²⁹ However, there is reason to believe that most of these were self-inflicted. At least six and possibly a seventh were caused by bullets of Canadian calibre, and were inflicted in non-threatening regions of the body such as the hands and feet.³⁰ Moreover, none of them coincided with the Chinese infantry attack on 23-24 October. Four of the 11 were, however, directly attributable to Chinese "burp gun" fire.³¹ Thus, a more plausible percentage of non-fatal GSWs due to direct enemy action would be in the four percent range, with shell and

²⁸"Monthly Report, 1 RAP RCR."

²⁹"Monthly Report," War Diary, 1 RCR, October 1952,

³⁰"Monthly Report," 1 RCR. As has been seen in Chapter Seven, however, only one of these was officially classified as a SIW.

³¹"Monthly Report," 1 RCR.

mortar fire accounting for the overwhelming majority of 1 RCR casualties.

Field artillery and mortars were, then, the most prodigious killers of Canadian infantry. This was hardly unique to Korea. The fathers and older brothers of the men in the 25th Brigade faced the same threat from shells in the World Wars. What was unique to Korea was the use of armoured vests to reduce casualties from shell fire. Developed by the Americans, the eight pound vests were "filled with overlapping plates of moulded fibreglass and nylon."³² When worn properly, they could prevent "60-70 percent of chest and upper abdominal wounds," and reduce fatal casualties by 10-20 percent.³³ Tested by the Canadians on a limited basis in May 1952, it was not until the following spring that sufficient numbers became available to outfit most of the troops manning the forward fighting positions. In other words, armoured vests arrived too late to have a significant impact on the overall Canadian casualty rate during the Korean War.³⁴ In October 1952, for example, the 1 R22eR, the first Canadian unit equipped with armoured vests, only had enough to outfit 30 men. This

³²Peacock, Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum, 78.

³³"Notes On Body Armour In Korea, 14 August 1952," War Diary, HQ 25th CIB, February 1953, Appendix 20, 1.

³⁴The 1 RCR War Diary for October 1952 makes no mention of armoured vests in the battalion, although it does record the issue of steel helmets.

number increased to 60 in February 1953, and "when the unit last entered the line, in April, it was equipped with 300 armoured vests"³⁵ -- still not enough for all of the men in the 1 R22eR support and rifle companies.

Although American Body Armour Research Teams had specifically warned against issuing insufficient numbers of armoured vests to front line troops, citing an "adverse" impact on morale, 25th Brigade Headquarters continued to dole them out as they became available.³⁶ Lieutenant Robert Peacock of the 3 PPCLI recalled that the issue of ten armoured vests to his platoon in mid-December 1952 "caused a bit of a dilemma."³⁷ With enough vests for only one-third of his command, the young subaltern restricted their issue to sentries and men manning the Observation Posts. Other platoons may not have been so egalitarian. A Private who served in the same battalion as Peacock has stated that his platoon's ten vests were allocated according to rank, beginning with the platoon leader.³⁸ Considerations of risk simply did not figure into the decision.

The Canadian soldiers fortunate enough to be issued an armoured vest certainly liked them. Lieutenant-Colonel

³⁵"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Trudeau," 2.

³⁶"Notes On Body Armour In Korea," 3.

³⁷Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 78.

³⁸Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

Campbell claimed that, unlike the issue steel helmet, "the troops liked wearing the vests"³⁹ But even armoured vests had their limits. Although they could stop shell fragments, they were not bullet proof. This did not prevent some soldiers from foolishly relying on their armoured vests "for protection against snipers."⁴⁰ A careless soldier in the 3 PPCLI, for example, was gut-shot by a Chinese sniper while returning from a patrol. The bullet passed clean through his vest, killing him instantly.⁴¹ Nor did they offer much protection from a direct shell hit: a high-explosive blast could still vaporize a man wearing an armoured vest.

EVACUATION

Assuming that a man was not vaporized by a shell, and that he survived the initial impact of bullet or fragment, it became imperative to get him to an advanced medical treatment facility as quickly possible. This was, of course, far easier said than done. Evacuation of wounded men under fire has always been difficult at the best of times, and Korea's rugged terrain and climatic extremes

³⁹"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 9.

⁴⁰Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 78-79.

⁴¹Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 325.

certainly made the task no easier.⁴²

The casualty first had to be removed from the scene of the fighting. As in every other war, this crucial first step along the evacuation chain was made with the help of his immediate comrades. He might be carried, dragged, pushed, rolled or helped along, depending on the nature of his wounds and the tactical situation. For example, if under artillery fire in defensive positions, the casualty was pulled into the nearest bunker; on patrol, he was carried back to the "firm base," or patrol rallying point.

Having removed the casualty from any further danger, the next step was to render any life saving first aid. This could include anything from applying a shell dressing to a sucking chest wound to tying a tourniquet to a severed limb.⁴³ The timely and effective provision of emergency first aid at this stage could often mean the difference between life and death.⁴⁴ Private D. Bateman described the first crucial seconds after his three-man patrol was caught in a mortar barrage:

...I heard the cries [of a wounded man] but before I reached him, I came upon [the signalman]. I bent down and felt his pulse and it wasn't beating so I

⁴²Lieutenant-Colonel C.B. Caswell, "Medical Unit Completes Year's Service in Korea," *Canadian Army Journal* (July 1953), 126.

⁴³Each soldier carried a sterile shell dressing in his pocket or looped through his rifle sling.

⁴⁴FM 21-11, *First Aid For Soldiers*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, June 1976, 4.

knew he was dead. I then went over to [the other wounded man] and he told me he was hit in the legs, arms, and body. I was laying a blanket over him when a mortar bomb landed about 15 to 20 feet away. I caught a piece of shrapnel in the left cheek. It started to bleed so bad [sic] that I put a field dressing on it ...I then put a tourniquet around [the wounded man's] leg.⁴⁵

With the casualty stabilized, the next step was to prepare him for evacuation, or, in the case of Private Bateman, to return to Canadian lines as quickly as possible and organize a stretcher party. A large "M" was painted on the casualty's forehead, or the empty surette hooked through his front breast pocket, indicating that the medic had given him morphine -- that is, of course, if he was not wounded in the head in which case morphine was withheld. The standard four-man wood and canvass stretcher was the most convenient way to transport a wounded man, although its awkward size and shape was a problem in the narrow communications trenches leading back from the forward positions. The Regimental or KSC bearers often had to carry the stretcher over their heads "in order to accommodate the width of the stretcher to the narrowness of the trench."⁴⁶ Patrols, on the other hand, seldom carried stretchers. Until the appearance of a specially-designed light telescopic stretcher in early 1953, the preferred method was to fashion

⁴⁵Private D. Bateman, 3 RCR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

⁴⁶"The Advanced Regimental Aid Post In Static Warfare," 3 RCR, War Diary, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,350, March 1953, Appendix 12, 2.

a crude litter out of a blanket and extra rifle slings.⁴⁷

The journey to the Regimental Aid Post (RAP), the first medical facility along the evacuation chain, could be excruciatingly slow, especially for patrols forced to bring their wounded in under fire. Even in the absence of hostile fire, there was always ice, mud, ambushes or minefields to contend with: it was not usual for a patrol with wounded to take two or three hours to reach Canadian lines.⁴⁸ For this reason, the 25th Brigade introduced the Forward, or Advanced, Regimental Aid Post in June 1952. This was essentially "a small medical establishment centred about the Regimental medical officer. It [could] be set up quickly at any given point in forward positions where moderately heavy or heavy casualties [were] anticipated."⁴⁹

The introduction of the Advanced RAP spared the wounded the long and difficult journey to the rear without the benefit of medical attention, drastically reducing treatment time. At the Advanced RAP, the Medical Officer (MO) quickly assessed each case and commenced treating the most seriously wounded. He was often assisted in this by the practice of

⁴⁷Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 31.

⁴⁸"The Advanced Regimental Aid Post In Static Warfare,"
2.

⁴⁹"The Advanced Regimental Aid Posy In Static Warfare,"
1.

"Listening In" on the Commanding Officer's radio net.⁵⁰

Under this arrangement, the MO followed the patrol from the moment it left Canadian lines to the time it returned. If any casualties were sustained he was able to take special action, such as the preparation of blood plasma, for their reception.

After being examined by the MO and given any necessary life-saving treatment, casualties were released for transport (usually by stretcher) to the RAP. If enemy shelling had not cut the wires the MO telephoned his counterpart at the RAP to pass on any relevant information concerning the types and numbers of casualties being evacuated. Minor wounds were dressed at the RAP, while those requiring more advanced treatment were prepared for the move to the Casualty Clearing Post (CCP) located just behind the front line with the Canadian Field Ambulance. Most made the journey over the pot-holed dirt tracks leading back to the CCP by jeep ambulance. A driver recalled the emotional turmoil engendered by his sombre job:

Our main task was to transport the wounded as quickly as possible with the least amount of time available. There were times when the screaming from the wounded was a little too much. They made a point to rotate us as often as possible as ambulance drivers and guard duty [sic] so that we wouldn't go crazy looking at the wounded and all the blood all the time. I challenge anyone to spend six months caring for

⁵⁰"The Advanced Regimental Aid Post In Static Warfare,"
8.

wounded and dead and not go crazy.⁵¹

A small minority of wounded men were spared the jeep ambulance ride to the rear and evacuated directly from the RAP by helicopter. The request for a helicopter medevac was made by the MO and relayed through Battalion HQ to the appropriate American MASH authorities. However, the helicopter's limited availability and two-stretcher payload meant that "only those soldiers seriously wounded or injured and where the time factor [was] important" could expect to be evacuated in this manner.⁵² Head wounds, penetrating chest wounds, penetrating abdominal wounds, fractured femurs, and burns were all likely candidates. Helicopters were not used to evacuate the dead.

In ideal conditions, it took about half-an-hour for a medevac helicopter to reach the designated "pick-up" site. A number of factors could conspire to lengthen this considerably. The helicopters of the day were extremely fragile by modern standards and prone to damage from even light enemy fire: all requests for helicopter evacuation had to be accompanied by "a guarantee that the 'pick-up' area [was] free" from enemy and "friendly" fire.⁵³ Their

⁵¹Corporal B.J. LeFrancois, No. 37 Field Ambulance, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

⁵²"Helicopter Evacuation of Casualties in Korea - 25 CIB," No. 25 FDS, War Diary, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,396, July 1952, Appendix 9, 1.

⁵³"Evacuation of Cases by Helicopter, 31 August 1951," 1st Commonwealth Division, War Diary, PRO, WO 281/27, August

fragility and lack of sophisticated navigational equipment also precluded their use in winds over 35 miles per hour, heavy rain, sleet, or snow, and at night. Finally, all "pick-up" sites had to be "free from obstructions," measure a minimum of 50 square feet (in hot, windless conditions an area 400 feet by 100 feet was needed), and clearly marked with smoke grenades and aircraft identification panels.⁵⁴

Because helicopter evacuations in forward areas were extremely delicate operations at the best of times, they were also relatively rare: only 31 Canadian soldiers were evacuated by helicopter between 1 July 1951 and 29 February 1952.⁵⁵ Assessing the utility of helicopter evacuation from a strictly medical point of view, a Brigade report concluded:

it would seem that the helicopter as used in Korea has a limited role in the evacuation of casualties. The present day motor ambulance car still remains the reliable method of evacuation and must continue to be looked upon as such when the problems of casualty evacuation are considered.⁵⁶

There can, however, be no doubting the positive impact of helicopters in Korea. No other mode of evacuation could match the helicopter's speed and comfort. When available, they could have a dramatic impact on the number of fatal

1951. Appendix "G", 1.

⁵⁴"Evacuation of Cases by Helicopter," 2.

⁵⁵"Helicopter Evacuation of Casualties in Korea," 4.

⁵⁶"Helicopter Evacuation of Casualties in Korea," 4.

casualties. Lieutenant-Colonel Stone was adamant that the evacuation of the wounded by helicopter during the Battle of Kap'yong helped keep the number of fatalities in his battalion to a minimum. He was also convinced that they "gave a great boost to morale."⁵⁷

In view of the helicopter's technical and tactical limitations in Korea, it is understandable that the vast majority of wounded men made the journey to the CCP by jeep ambulance. Here, the wounded were re-examined and triaged according to wound severity and required treatment. Men who required less than four day's treatment were admitted to the CCP's casualty ward; those requiring intensive care were evacuated by air transport to the British Commonwealth Hospital in Kure, Japan; minor surgical cases were placed in an "Army Service Corps box ambulance" and moved to either an American or Norwegian MASH unit, or to the No. 25 Canadian Field Dressing Station (FDS) north of Seoul.⁵⁸ Finally, men who required "casual" hospitalization (usually less than two weeks) for illness, minor wounds, and post-surgical convalescence were admitted to the Canadian hospital in

⁵⁷Colonel Jim Stone, 2 PPCLI, cited in Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, 41.

⁵⁸Captain Keith Besley, RCAMC, quoted in Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, 43; "Report by Mr. A.R. Menzies of the Department of External Affairs On Impressions of His Visit to the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade in Korea, 12-17 October 1951," DHist, file 681.001(D1), 11.

Seoul.⁵⁹

Canadian soldiers had little cause for complaint in the American or Norwegian MASH units, or the No. 25 FDS. The food was good and plentiful, the wards were comfortable, and the standard of care was generally high -- especially when it was provided by a young Norwegian nurse! The same cannot be said for the Canadian hospital in Seoul. A soldier hospitalized for a burned hand wrote his parents:

They talk about how well the boys that are sick and wounded are getting treated.... You would figure that in a hospital forty or fifty miles from the line that treatment would be good. But this hospital that is Canadian is one living hell. To tell you the truth it is not fit for pigs to live in. They have about ten of us in one room, the windows are all knocked out and the stoves won't stay lit. There are holes in the floor big enough for a horse to fall through. We even have to go and get our own meals. Its hard to believe that I got better medical treatment and fed better up in the front lines.... When you get hurt or wounded you get treated worse than a pig pen full of pigs ready to go to the market. Its no wonder we are losing so many men... they want to get killed because they say they would be better off dead than get the treatment we are getting.⁶⁰

Conditions continued to deteriorate at the Canadian hospital through the spring and summer of 1952, prompting the Vice-Adjutant General, Brigadier J.W. Bishop, to make a special visit in October. Not only was the Brigadier disappointed by the ramshackle nature of the facility, but

⁵⁹"VAG Liaison Visit, Far East - Medical Aspects, 29 October 1952," NAC, Adjutant General Branch, War Diary, Volume 18,224, October 1952, Appendix "A".

⁶⁰Private Ray Dooley, 1 PPCLI, letter to parents, 23 November 1952, PPCLI Archives, file 111(4)-1.

he was surprised to discover that its 200 patients did not have proper beds or sheets. Apparently, the Commonwealth Division officer responsible for the overall administration of the hospital (who was also a Brigadier) "felt that it was in a vulnerable position and should not be hampered with equipment which might be difficult to move."⁶¹ Brigadier Bishop retorted that "he did not consider the loss of a few hospital beds as particularly significant in the case of a severe military reverse," but to no avail.⁶² The obstinate officer refused to recognize the absurdity of his position, compelling Bishop to pull rank and broach the matter with the newly appointed commander of the Commonwealth Division, Major-General Alston-Roberts-West. The General concurred "with [Bishop's] views completely," and agreed to inspect the hospital forthwith.⁶³ Bishop's ploy worked; there was a marked improvement in conditions at the hospital in the months following the General's visit.

Seriously wounded men evacuated directly to the British Commonwealth Hospital in Kure did not have to worry about inadequate bedding or missing floorboards: with one important exception (see Chapter Nine, below), the equipment

⁶¹"VAG Liaison Visit, Far East - Medical Aspects, 29 October 1952."

⁶²"VAG Liaison Visit, Far East - Medical Aspects, 29 October 1952."

⁶³"VAG Liaison Visit, Far East - Medical Aspects, 29 October 1952."

and standard of care at the Commonwealth hospital was first-rate. Sergeant John Richardson of the 1 PPCLI was especially impressed by the surgeons. He remembered:

The two Australian surgeons were built like football players. Both joined from private practice to receive additional experience with traumatic injuries. Never a day passed that we didn't have visits from other Commonwealth surgeons.... That my knee holds up to this day is directly attributable to their care.⁶⁴

As comfortable as the Commonwealth Hospital may have been, nothing could match the elation of being selected for air evacuation back to Canada. A young ambulance driver remembered the laughter and banter that reverberated off the cavernous interior of the North American-bound Douglas Dakota transport planes as the wounded were hoisted aboard. "They were happy because they were going home, and it rubbed off on me. It made my tour that much easier."⁶⁵

To qualify for repatriation, a wounded man had to be incapable of returning "to a duty status within a 120 day period."⁶⁶ A soldier could also be eligible under the 25th Brigade's tri-wound policy. On the surface, this policy allowed for the "early rotation" of any soldier who was wounded three times. However, the fine print dictated that

⁶⁴Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 326.

⁶⁵Anonymous soldier, No.37 Canadian Field Ambulance, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 25 August 1996.

⁶⁶"Evacuation Policy - Korean Theatre of Operations, 23 May 1951," NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-84/048, box 2153, file 5835-1, Part 1, Transportation - Casualties - Evacuation Policy, 1951-52, 1.

all three wounds had to be serious enough to receive medical attention at the RAP level or higher, and be the result of direct enemy action. It is not known how many -- or indeed if any -- Canadian soldiers qualified for early rotation under the tri-wound policy, as 25th Brigade medical records remain classified. At least one soldier did come close, only to be turned down at the last moment by a medical review board. The soldier in question had received two wounds early in his tour: one from a mortar fragment and the other from a mine blast. His third, so-called "million dollar" wound, was a severe burn caused by an improperly constructed field stove. To his chagrin, a medical review board at the CCP ruled that an accidental stove burn "was not a 'wound' proper."⁶⁷ He was therefore deemed ineligible for early rotation, and unceremoniously admitted to the Canadian hospital in Seoul for treatment.

ACCIDENTS

It was an unfortunate fact of life in Korea that men often became casualties through accidents. Patrols were ripped to shreds after stumbling into an uncharted minefield; the pins retaining the striker mechanism on the No. 36 grenade worked themselves free after being subjected to the wear and tear of life in the field; artillery fire

⁶⁷Personnel Records Survey, file No.73.

fell short amongst "friendly" troops; motor transports slid off ice-covered mountain roads into deep ravines; tired men could not be bothered to clear their weapons before cleaning them; friends were mistaken for the enemy in the dark communication trenches along the *Jamestown* line; heavily burdened men plunged through the ice of a frozen river and drowned. All of this and more happened in the 25th Brigade during the Korean War, claiming the lives of 43 men and wounding countless others.⁶⁸

However, it was not drowning, "friendly" fire, or even minefields that were responsible for the majority of accidents in the 25th Brigade. As the experiences of the man denied repatriation under the tri-wound policy suggest, that distinction belonged to improvised field stoves. Burns caused by the "careless" use of "petrol for domestic purposes" had been problems in the Second World War but nothing like they were in Korea.⁶⁹ From the time the first Canadians arrived in the Far East, there was an acute shortage of proper stoves and fuel. In their absence, soldiers were forced to improvise with tragic results.

Korean winters are notoriously cold. In the mountains along the 38th parallel freezing temperatures combine with

⁶⁸"Canadian Army Fatal Casualties - Korean War."

⁶⁹Arthur Salusbury MacNalty and W. Franklin Mellor, *Medical Services In War: The Principal Medical Lessons of the Second World War* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968), 442.

strong winds to make life out of doors difficult and dangerous. The long hours of darkness are particularly frigid, with temperatures plummeting well below zero degrees Celsius. Hypothermia is a constant threat, with tired, wet and undernourished bodies being particularly susceptible to the deleterious effects of this silent killer. Without recourse to a warm shelter and a source of hot fluids those afflicted will surely die.

Thus as winter began to descend over the Korean peninsula towards the end of 1951, the 25th Brigade found itself in need of several thousand field stoves. As most of the infantry were quartered in bunkers and firewood was extremely scarce, what was required was a liquid-fuel field stove that could be safely installed and operated in the confines of their cantonments. However, as with so many other items of military kit and equipment, there was an acute shortage of field stoves in Korea. To make matters worse, the two types issued to the Canadians, the M37 Cooker and the US M1951 Tent Stove, both operated on kerosene, another rare commodity in the Far East.⁷⁰ As is usually the case in war, shortages were most pronounced in the front line; REMFs ("Rear Echelon Mother Fuckers") on the other hand, always seemed to have an abundant supply of both

⁷⁰Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 78.

stoves and kerosene.⁷¹

Stuck on a wind-lashed Korean hilltop in a freezing cold bunker, soldiers were forced to improvise. Even if they were fortunate enough to have "acquired" a proper field stove, chances were they did not have any kerosene. It was difficult enough keeping the men in the front line supplied with ammunition, water and food, let alone a steady flow of scarce kerosene. However, the few troops who did have proper field stoves soon discovered that gasoline could be used instead. Gasoline was easier to obtain at the front, and so long as it accomplished the immediate objective of fuelling his stove, the average soldier was unlikely to concern himself with the dangers associated with its use. Lieutenant Robert Peacock explained:

...we had [an American] tent stove which we adapted to use gasoline for fuel instead of kerosene which was in short supply. Quite often the fuel control generators would malfunction and a pool of heated gasoline would collect in the base of the stove where it would eventually explode.⁷²

Soldiers unable to steal, trade or scrounge a proper field stove had to make their own. A number of different designs appeared during the war, but the "drip" and "can" types were most popular. Both were constructed around a burner compartment, usually a metal 25 pounder ammunition

⁷¹No. 1 Canadian Army Operational Research Team, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," War Diary, Headquarters, 25th CIB, NAC, Volume 18,247, January 1953, Appendix 37B, 514.

⁷²Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 78.

box filled with several inches of sand and "cut to provide air intakes and to receive a stove pipe."⁷³ A metal 4.2 inch mortar transport tube was normally used for this purpose. The drip stove was fed by a gravity system, normally a rubber surgical hose with a small brass valve affixed to one end that regulated the drip of gasoline into the burner compartment.⁷⁴ The operation of the can stove was far less technical: a can filled with gasoline was simply inserted into the burner compartment and ignited.⁷⁵ Both designs usually incorporated features to facilitate cooking, and neither "could be called environmentally friendly by today's standards."⁷⁶ Both were also potentially dangerous.

With the onset of cold weather in Korea, the Canadians' field expedient stoves began to take their toll. In October 1951 six soldiers were admitted to the No.25 FDS with grievous burns; by January the number had jumped to 38 and that was just the severe cases.⁷⁷ Not included in the statistics were the scores of soldiers who received

⁷³CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 513.

⁷⁴Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 78.

⁷⁵CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 513.

⁷⁶Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 78.

⁷⁷"Monthly Reports," No.25 Canadian FDS, War Diary, NAC, Volume 18,396, October 1951 to January 1952.

treatment for minor burns in the front line by platoon medics.

By early 1952 it was apparent that the Canadians were suffering a disproportionate number of casualties due to accidental burns. The experiences of the 1 PPCLI on 9 January reflect, in microcosm, the gravity of the problem. At 1100 hours "a blowback in the stove in the Mortar Platoon [Command Post] completely razed the bunker."⁷⁸ Over the course of the next few hours, "runaway stoves" destroyed the Battalion Command Post, Tactical Headquarters, the Commanding Officer's bunker, and a tent containing small arms ammunition. Miraculously, only three men were wounded, all by exploding ammunition.

It was initially believed that the stoves issued to the 25th Brigade were unsafe, and hence responsible for the large number of Canadian burn casualties.⁷⁹ But as the majority of troops were not issued with proper fuel, let alone proper stoves, this was not simply a case of defective equipment. That such an assumption could even be countenanced was a measure of the distance between defence planners in Ottawa and the troops in the firing line.

As the number of burn casualties continued to mount, DND ordered the No.1 Canadian Army Operational Research Team

⁷⁸War Diary, 1 PPCLI, War Diary, 9 January 1952.

⁷⁹CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade," 510.

(CAORT) into action. The team duly conducted a detailed study of burns casualties in Korea, releasing its findings in an official report in January 1953. The CAORT report is thorough and forthright and provides the historian with a window into this important, but neglected, aspect of the Canadian casualty experience in Korea.

CAORT's most significant finding was that the majority of burn incidents occurred in the three infantry battalions.⁸⁰ This in itself is not surprising, as the infantry accounted for the vast majority of the 25th Brigade's fighting strength. However, recalling that shortages of stoves and kerosene were most pronounced in the front line, numbers alone are not sufficient explanation for the infantry having suffered a preponderance of burns casualties in Korea.

The CAORT report supports this assertion. In April 1952, 1500 stoves were in service with the 25th Brigade of which half were improvised.⁸¹ All of the latter were located in forward positions with the infantry. Significantly, the accident rate for these was found to be *three times* greater than that for issue stoves.⁸² Close

⁸⁰CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 514.

⁸¹CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 514.

⁸²This does not include official issue stoves improperly fuelled by gasoline. CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 514.

scrutiny of the types of accidents most commonly associated with improvised stoves explains this discrepancy and provides a glimpse of the danger the Canadian fighting man confronted each time he retired to the specious safety of his front line abode.

Half of the accidents involving improvised stoves occurred during refuelling.⁸³ In the case of drip stoves, accidents occurred when the fuel reservoir was placed too close to the burner plate -- normally the result of an inadequate length of rubber tubing. When the gasoline became hot enough it exploded, engulfing the bunker in a shower of flames. Accidents involving can stoves usually happened after a fresh can of gasoline was placed in the burner compartment while the stove was still hot. According to the CAORT report, "failure to take reasonable precautions against the hazards of gasoline vapour in an enclosed space," accounted for most of the other accidents involving improvised stoves.⁸⁴ What "precautions" should (or could) have been taken in a front line bunker designed to withstand enemy shelling the CAORT report did not say.

All gasoline burns were extremely painful, but specific treatment depended upon severity. Patients with third degree burns -- the most serious type -- had their "fluid,

⁸³CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade," 514.

⁸⁴CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade," 514.

including blood, requirements restored, burn toilets were carried out," and special National Research Council burn dressings applied.⁸⁵ Treatment was often complicated by the presence of foreign matter in the burns, making debridement necessary. The Canadian nylon combat parka was especially prone to fuse with the skin when exposed to the intense heat of a gasoline explosion, a lesson that seems to be lost on the current generation of nylon-shelled Goretex military parkas. Less severe burns were usually treated by the exposure method, although this was not practical when casualties had to be evacuated by ambulance over Korea's dust-choked roads.⁸⁶ Finally, minor burns that did not require specialized treatment could be left open to heal on their own.

Treatment of burns could be excruciatingly slow. A burn casualty required an average of 30 days of treatment. Of the 55 severe cases examined in the CAORT report, approximately one half required less than 14 days, while the rest required anywhere from several weeks to several months; the average loss of time away from duty was 57 days.⁸⁷ Thus, "from the point of view of manpower loss, burns [were]

⁸⁵Brigadier K.A. Hunter and Colonel J.E. Andrew, "The RCAMC in the Korean War: A Paper Presented to the Canadian Medical Association at Vancouver, June 1954," DHist, file 147.013(D4), 12.

⁸⁶Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC in the Korean War," 12.

⁸⁷CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 515.

expensive."⁸⁸

Burned soldiers were almost certain to carry the scars of their misfortune for life. These could range from small, aesthetically unpleasing blemishes to gross disfigurements in which the soldier's hands and face disappeared under layers of shiny scar tissue. Fortunately, two world wars worth of experience and advances in skin grafting techniques kept these to a minimum. However, this was hardly consolation for the handful of men who returned to civilian life without the use of their hands, or without a face.

The available evidence strongly suggests that accidental burns from "runaway stoves" remained a serious threat through the winter of 1952-53. In October 1952 (three months before the appearance of the CAORT report) Brigadier Bogert issued routine orders dealing specifically with fire prevention and stove safety. Unfortunately, they dealt almost exclusively with fire safety in stove-equipped tents. As the vast majority of accidental burns involved improvised stoves in front line *bunkers*, Bogert's safety recommendations were considerably off mark. Granted, the CAORT report was not yet available when they were issued; however, a survey of No.25 FDS admission records from January 1953 (the month the CAORT report appeared) forward, shows that the Canadians never really succeeded in reducing

⁸⁸CAORT, "Burns and Fires in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 515.

the number of accidental burns casualties in Korea (see Table 7.3).⁸⁹ This can be attributed to the continued use of improvised stoves in the front line. Even in the aftermath of the CAORT report the infantry were compelled to use the same improvised stoves they always had. The results were predictable.

Table 7.3: Accidental Burns Requiring Medical Evacuation

1952

<u>Month</u>	<u># of Burns Casualties</u>	<u>% of Total Admissions</u>
January	17	5.6
February	2	1.0
March	4	2.1

1953

<u>Month</u>	<u># of Burns Casualties</u>	<u>% of Total Admissions</u>
January	10	5.6
February	11	5.6
March	3	1.8

CONCLUSION

Accidental burns were only one of many dangers faced by front line soldiers in Korea. They could also be shot,

⁸⁹"Monthly Reports," War Diary, No.25 FDS, January-March 1953.

blown up, captured, or wounded in any one of a myriad of different accidents. That so many men survived their wounds is testimony to the effectiveness and flexibility of the evacuation chain in Korea. As this chapter has shown, however, exaggerated assessments of the medevac helicopter's role in the 25th Brigade, as well as the impact of body armour on the overall Canadian casualty rate, must be made with due caution. Finally, while the quality of medical care in Korea was generally excellent, there were exceptions, notably the Canadian hospital in Seoul.

The treatment of wounded men was, alas, only one facet of the larger Canadian medical experience in Korea. Disease also posed a threat to the health of soldiers. In its treatment and prevention, Canadian medical authorities enjoyed far less success.

CHAPTER NINE

DISEASE

Wounds and burns were not the only causes of Canadian casualties in Korea. Despite advances in preventative medicine and the widespread use of antibiotics, many men were incapacitated by disease during their Far Eastern tour. Most of these ailments were easily treated but others led to painful and ghastly deaths. Nevertheless, the mortality rate from disease was the lowest in Canadian military history.¹ What is significant about the Canadian epidemiological experience in Korea was the number of diseases, from haemorrhagic fever to chancroid, that had rarely been encountered in the past. As a result, the 25th Brigade suffered a disturbingly high number of non-battle casualties which placed an enormous strain on its already overtaxed manpower resources.

EPIDEMIOLOGY IN THE 25TH BRIGADE

Disease has always posed a serious threat to soldiers. Typhus ravaged the Bavarian Army in 1812, while during the notoriously unhealthy Crimean War nearly ten per cent of the total British force was lost to disease.² Armies can be

¹Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC in the Korean War," 7.

²War Office, *Handbook of Army Health*, 1950, 1.

vast incubators for disease and must go to great lengths to prevent the potential disaster of an outbreak. Thus, over the course of the first weeks after their induction, the soldiers of the 25th Brigade received a series of basic vaccinations against typhus, typhoid, small pox, TABT (polio), cholera and plague.³ The latter two were especially unpopular with the troops as they often became quite ill after receiving them.

Canadian medical officers were understandably shocked by Korea's unhygienic conditions (see Chapter Five), and their early situation reports portended a fierce struggle against disease in the Far East.⁴ A report from the 2 PPCLI laconically stated:

Korea is a land of filth and poverty.... Diseases, except venereal ones will not be a problem during the winter, but as all fertilizing of fields is done with human excreta there is no doubt that there will be a health problem in spring and summer....⁵

Thanks to the immunization program, however, many of the epidemiological killers from the past were seldom encountered in Korea. Having said this, at least one Canadian soldier contracted smallpox after being vaccinated. In March 1951, 2 PPCLI's Lieutenant-Colonel Stone was evacuated to Canada after developing the high fever, nausea,

³"Medical Arrangements - CASF, Part 1," NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-84/167, box 5210, file 3701-151/24.

⁴"Sitreps By 25th CIB," DHist, file 419FE.009(D4), 3.

⁵"Reports by Lt Col JR Stone on activities of 2 PPCLI in Korea, 18/23 Dec 1950," DHist, file 145.2P7013(D6), 3.

headache and pinkish red spots characteristic of small pox. He contracted the disease in the village of Wol-li, where he had established a temporary headquarters in a thatched hut filled with the bodies of dead children.⁶ Apparently, the two injections Stone had received prior to embarkation were reported as "no take," and the whole battalion was subsequently re-vaccinated in Korea with a "special Japanese-type small pox vaccine."⁷ This incident, while isolated, served to remind the Canadians that preventative measures were not always effective and that serious illness or death were not confined to the battlefield.

Although "old-fashioned" diseases like typhus, plague, diphtheria, cholera and smallpox were rare in Korea, several other diseases, some of which were new to the Canadians, quickly appeared to take their place. Most were endemic to the Far East and of the infective or parasitic variety. All were highly contagious and some even fatal. Canadian medical authorities were not always prepared or equipped to cope with them, although treatment often improved with experience. A selective examination of the most problematical of these "new" diseases provides yet another window into the 25th Brigade's continuing struggle with the unfamiliar conditions encountered in the Far East.

⁶Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 63.

⁷"Medical Arrangements - CASF, Part 1," 1.

DYSENTERY, DIARRHEA AND HEPATITIS

Korea's primitive sanitary conditions made gastrointestinal infections like dysentery, acute diarrhea and hepatitis inevitable. Dysentery appeared early in the war, several soldiers from the 2 PPCLI contracted it during the winter of 1951.⁸ At this time the battlefront was still fluid, and the Patricias in question contracted the disease after consuming untreated paddy water. Apparently, the exigencies of operations during this period precluded the proper use of the halazone water purification tablets included in the Canadians' daily ration packs. However, with the occupation of semi-permanent defensive positions in the fall of 1951, chemically treated water from portable trailers was widely available and the incidence of dysentery dropped substantially.⁹

Far more common, although sharing many of the same symptoms of dysentery, was acute diarrhea. Not only could it make life in the field incredibly uncomfortable with up to thirty explosive bowel movements a day in severe cases, but it could lead to severe dehydration. Diarrhea could be caused by anything from indigestible C-ration meals (ham and

⁸"Statistics - Korea, 20 March 1951," NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-84/048, box 977, file 3105-151/25, Personnel Statistics, CASF, 1951-1953.

⁹War Diary, No. 25 Canadian FDS, June 1950 to December 1953.

lima beans were especially bad) to food poisoning. Such was the latter case in May 1952 when an entire section of the 1 RCR occupying a forward outpost became violently ill after consuming their evening meal. Clyde Bougie, a hygiene orderly from the No. 25 FDS, who investigated the outbreak, recalled:

I was told by the kitchen NCO that the food had been taken out to the outpost [by the KSC]... in hay boxes. I inspected all the hay boxes and found one had a small cut at the bottom.... I inquired as to what was put in this one and the Sergeant said hamburger patties and that the container was always used for meat. It was concluded that the juices that soaked into the insulation had contaminated all of the patties that came in contact with the juice and that the men at the very end of the trenches were the last to be served and had been poisoned.¹⁰

As in the Second World War jaundice due to infectious hepatitis was relatively common in Korea.¹¹ Although it "never reached serious proportions,"¹² it was a continual source of non-battle casualties, typically accounting for 18 percent of all Canadian infective and parasitic diseases.¹³

¹⁰Corporal Clyde R. Bougie, RCAMC, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

¹¹Arthur Salusbury MacNalty and W. Franklin Mellor, *Medical Services in War: The Principal Medical Lessons of the Second World War* (London: HMSO, 1968), 523.

¹²Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 9. It is not possible to compare the hepatitis rates in the various Commonwealth contingents as the Divisional statistics normally placed cases in the "Other" infectious disease category.

¹³Monthly Progress Reports, "Breakdown of Morbidity," War Diary, No. 25 Canadian Field Dressing Station, September 1951 to December 1953, NAC, RG 24, Volumes 18,395 to 18,397.

To make matters even worse, hepatitis patients "lost an average of fifty days from duty."¹⁴

Hepatitis A was transmitted by the oral-faecal route (when a healthy individual consumed food or water containing the faecal matter of an infected person), through person-to-person contact, or through contaminated food and water. The oral-faecal mode of transmission was common during the first year of the war, when the Canadians found themselves operating in Korea's notorious rice paddies. It is no coincidence that the incidence of hepatitis A in the Commonwealth Division as a whole decreased by 43.6 percent with the occupation of the *Jamestown* line.¹⁵

Hepatitis B, on the other hand, was usually transmitted by infected blood. In contrast to the Americans, who used disposable plastic intravenous equipment, or "Bernard" kits, the Canadians (and indeed all the Commonwealth forces) relied on the outmoded "Baxter" kits.¹⁶ Made from glass, the "Baxters" were re-used over and over again. Improperly sterilized, they became conduits for the spread of homologous serum jaundice, an advanced form of hepatitis B. Obviously, this was the last thing that a wounded soldier

¹⁴MacNalty and Mellor, *Medical Services In War*, 523.

¹⁵"Appendix A," to ADMS 1st Commonwealth Division, Monthly Liaison Letter, Serial No. 25 - June 1953, Public Records Office, London, England (hereafter PRO), War Office (hereafter WO) file, 281/888, 1.

¹⁶Paul Grauwin, *Doctor At Dienbienphu* (New York: The John Day Company, 1955), 174.

needed. The switch to "Bernard" kits came too late to save several men who might have recovered from their wounds had they not contracted the disease in this manner.¹⁷

MALARIA, JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS AND HAEMORRHAGIC FEVER

Malaria, Japanese encephalitis and haemorrhagic fever shared at least four important characteristics in the context of the Korean War: they were spread by insects; all were potentially fatal; they were endemic to the Far East; and, they were more or less new to the doctors of the RCAMC.

The Canadian Army already had experience with some tropical diseases. In August 1943, the First Canadian Division in Sicily experienced a malaria "epidemic of serious proportions" necessitating "a drastic 'blanket' quinine therapy for the whole division."¹⁸ The cause of the outbreak was subsequently attributed to inadequate training and a general disregard for anti-malarial precautions.¹⁹ Only nine years after the Sicilian debacle, the Canadian Army found itself confronting yet another malaria outbreak: this time, in Canada.

¹⁷The existing documentary evidence does not contain statistics on how many Canadians actually died after contracting hepatitis B during the Korean War. One surviving medical officer has, however, put the number at five.

¹⁸MacNalty and Mellor, *Medical Services In War*, 486.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

Malaria is a serious and sometimes fatal disease caused by a parasite injected into the bloodstream through the bite of an infected female *Anopheles* mosquito. The early symptoms are flulike, followed by fever, chills, multiple organ failure and death. Canadian medical authorities recognized the threat posed by malaria in Korea, and instituted a preventative program based on the suppressive drug paludrine.²⁰ However, modern chemoprophylaxis like paludrine only suppress the clinical symptoms of malaria and do not necessarily prevent infection by the malaria parasite. To further complicate matters, the four different types of parasite which cause malaria in different parts of the world require different kinds of suppressive drugs. Thus, if the malaria parasite endemic to a given area is paludrine resistant, an individual using this drug stands a very good chance of developing the disease.

This is precisely what happened in the 25th Brigade. Following the return of the second battalions to Canada in early 1952, over 1000 cases of malaria were reported.²¹ These so-called "break-through" cases were promptly treated with a combination of primaquine and either quinine or chloroquin. "With this therapy," a post-war medical report

²⁰Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 8.

²¹Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 8. The British also reported a small number of "break-through" cases.

noted, "there were few recurrences."²²

As this example shows, the Canadian Army had not fully digested the lessons learned in Sicily, although treatment in Korea did "improve with experience."²³ Moreover, in contrast to the Sicilian campaign Canadian medical authorities advised against the wearing of shorts during Korea's hot summer months to reduce the risk of exposure to mosquito bites. Not all soldiers were happy with this decision. Lance-Corporal Ted Smyth commented that "khaki [pants] were great, but when it reached [ninety] degrees, even khaki became uncomfortable... it was at these times that shorts would have been appreciated."²⁴

Whether they realized it or not, long pants were clearly the right choice for troops serving in the Far East. Paludrine alone, however, was not. This might have been obvious to the Canadians had they possessed up to date malaria maps -- charts detailing the geographical locations of the different types of malaria parasite.²⁵ It is not

²²Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 8.

²³See "Monthly Reports," ADMS 1 Commonwealth Division, PRO, WO file 281/887, September 1951 to July 1953; Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," DHist, file 147.013(D4), 8.

²⁴Lance-Corporal Ted Smyth, LDSH, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

²⁵The difficulties experienced by Canadian medical planners in securing reliable malaria maps is partially to blame for the epidemic in the 1st Canadian Division in Sicily during the Second World War. See MacNalty and Mellor, *Medical Services In War*, 485-487.

entirely clear why these were unavailable, although the Northwest European focus of the post-Second World War Canadian Army may have been to blame. In their absence it was impossible to prescribe the correct chemoprophylactics, let alone identify the type of malaria parasite endemic to Korea. Clyde Bougie explained:

There were times when everyone in the lab gave up the search for parasites in particular blood samples as they could not find anything after looking through a microscope for more than twenty minutes. This one man had all the symptoms of malaria, but no parasite could be found.... I had a little time on my hands so I must have spent about two-and-a-half hours looking over several stained blood samples, when Bingo, out of nowhere I found one lonesome little parasite in a cell which I had each of the more experienced Lab Techs have a look, and sure enough... it was a positive case of malaria....²⁶

Although Canadian troops continued to take paludrine for the rest of the war, in the aftermath of the 1952 outbreak it was decided to supplement it with primaquine.²⁷ Taken together, these drugs proved extremely effective.

The shift to static warfare also permitted more effective use of other malaria control measures. All soldiers were issued head nets and twelve yards of mosquito netting.²⁸ These were far less likely to be used in the

²⁶Clyde Bougie, RCAMC, interview, 23 August 1996.

²⁷Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 8; Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 43.

²⁸"Provisional Operational Scale of Issue, Canadian Army Special Force," War Diary, Branch of the Adjutant General, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,225, September 1950, Appendix "A".

open field then in a bunker where they could be set up properly and left hanging for as long as soldiers remained in the front line. They were also less likely to be damaged, and hence more effective, when not subjected to the daily wear and tear of life on the march. The occupation of semi-permanent defensive positions also facilitated the saturation of nearby mosquito breeding areas with residual insecticides containing DDT. When combined with the revised chemoprophylactic program, these measures resulted in a drastically reduced malaria rate; by early 1953 the incidence of malaria was only a fifth of what it had been the year before.²⁹ Nevertheless, the Canadian rate continued to be slightly higher than experienced by the British or Australian Armies.³⁰

Having said this, it is unlikely that the 25th Brigade, or for that matter any other national contingent, could have succeeded in totally eradicating malaria from its ranks. As Korean veteran David Hackworth commented, there were always "some slackers who did not take their antimalarial pills and then went around inviting mosquitoes with their sleeves rolled up and shirts unbuttoned when the sun went down."³¹ So long as at least some soldiers viewed contracting the

²⁹Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 8.

³⁰See ADMS 1st Commonwealth Division Monthly Liaison Letters, April 1952 to August 1953, WO, file 281/888.

³¹Hackworth, *About Face*, 484.

disease as a way out of the front line, then the Canadians were bound to continue suffering malaria casualties no matter what preventative measures were implemented.

Like malaria, Japanese encephalitis was also endemic to the Far East. Spread by ticks and mosquitos, the early symptoms of this viral infection included fever, headache, muscle pain, malaise, lethargy and seizures. About one-fifth of Japanese encephalitis infections resulted in death.³² After much indecision, the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps decided in mid-1951 to vaccinate all Canadian troops at risk (ie., front line troops in regular contact with mosquitos and ticks) of contracting the disease. The highly effective vaccine, combined with the insect control measures discussed above, resulted in only a handful of Canadian cases. Nevertheless, as the No. 25 FDS's "Interesting Case" log makes abundantly clear, Japanese encephalitis caused Canadian medical officers considerable consternation and anxiety. The war diarist wrote:

Patient admitted... suffering from abdominal pain with a temperature of 102.4 and pulse of 110 was diagnosed variously as gastro-enteritis, appendicitis, and malaria. There was no diarrhoea or vomiting, no rigidity or guarding and smear for malaria parasite was negative. The pain however was acute. Final diagnosis was Japanese encephalitis and the patient was evacuated.³³

The consternation and anxiety attendant in "break-

³²"Medical Arrangements - CASF," Part 1.

³³"Monthly Progress Report - October 1953," War Diary, No. 25 FDS, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,396, November 1953, 4.

through" cases of Japanese encephalitis, paled in comparison to that caused by the horror-movie calibre epidemic haemorrhagic fever. Brigadier Rockingham reminisced that "this deadly Oriental disease upset our medical people terribly because they never heard of it before."³⁴ The entries by RCAMC doctors in the No. 25 FDS war diary confirm this. The monthly progress report for November 1951 recorded that while there had been a slight decrease in infectious hepatitis, "a new (for us) disease has shown itself... this is epidemic haemorrhagic fever."³⁵

Identified by the Japanese Army Medical Corps in Manchuria and Korea in 1943, the first cases of epidemic haemorrhagic fever appeared in UN field hospitals in June 1951. Known simply as "the fever" by the troops, the disease was spread by chigger mites carried on the bodies of rodents. Early symptoms included nausea, vomiting, headache, high fever and chills. As the disease progressed the patient began to cough blood, pass bloody stool and bleed from the skin. The mortality rate was between eight and 20 percent, with coma or death usually occurring in the third or fourth week.³⁶ There was, and still is, no specific treatment for "the

³⁴Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 57.

³⁵"Monthly Progress Report - November 1951," War Diary, No. 25 FDS, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,395, December 1951, 1.

³⁶"Epidemic Haemorrhagic Fever," NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-83/167, box 5216, file 3760-EHF, Medical and Hygiene - Haemorrhagic Fever, 1952-1953, 1.

fever."

It is difficult for the historian writing nearly five decades after the fact to express in print the fear induced in front line troops, their bunkers and fighting trenches crawling with large, aggressive rodents, by the ever-present threat of contracting haemorrhagic fever. War diarists certainly considered "the fever" worthy of mention. For example, the 4 January 1952 entry in the 1 PPCLI war diary recorded that in addition to an ambulance being ambushed in the rear of the Patricia position, "the incidence of an undiagnosed fever is increasing in the battalion... another man was evacuated today."³⁷ Rumours about this mysterious diseases circulated freely amongst the troops, embellished by graphic accounts of its victims' agony. Lance-Corporal Earl Richardson recalled: "Sergeant Crowen... contracted the dreaded disease. The medical staff could do nothing for him, except watch him die, bleeding from every orifice of his body, including his navel and eyeballs; nothing would stop the hemorrhaging."³⁸

Although the available statistics preclude a precise breakdown of haemorrhagic fever cases by national origin, there is reason to believe that most of the 26 Canadian soldiers who died of disease in Korea perished after

³⁷War Diary, 1 PPCLI, 4 January 1952.

³⁸Lance-Corporal Earl Richardson, 1/3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 320.

contracting "the fever."³⁹ Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that in mid-1952 the Canadians had the highest rate of infections in the Commonwealth Division. According to a report released in September 1952, 43 Canadian soldiers were evacuated with haemorrhagic fever between October 1951 and August 1952, compared to only 19 in the joint British-ANZAC 28th Brigade, and 26 in the all-British 29th Brigade.⁴⁰

One explanation for the higher incidence of haemorrhagic fever in the Canadian brigade is that medical officers may have wrongly diagnosed a number of less serious illnesses. As we have seen, "the fever" was virtually unknown before the Korean War; in the aftermath of the general panic invoked by its appearance doctors were more likely to err on the side of caution. Sergeant George Elliot of the 1 PPCLI, for example, was evacuated for what was believed to be haemorrhagic fever. After spending two leisurely weeks in an American hospital, he was diagnosed with a mild form of trench fever and returned to duty.⁴¹

As Sergeant Elliot's experience intimates, a man suspected of having "the fever" was quickly evacuated to a

³⁹"Fatal Casualties - Korean War."

⁴⁰ADMS 1st Commonwealth Division Monthly Liaison Letter, for the Four Week Period 28 June to August 31 1952," WO, file 281/888, 6.

⁴¹Sergeant George Elliot, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hopenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 320.

special American MASH unit. Even if he was later found to be suffering from another, less serious, illness the statistics of the No. 25 FDS still listed him as a haemorrhagic fever case. Although his personnel file would eventually reflect this changed diagnosis, it is unlikely that it would have been communicated to the No. 25 FDS.⁴² In other words, the statistics for the period in question might not be entirely accurate.

Another possible explanation for the high Canadian rate is that the 25th Brigade's forward positions contained an inordinate number of rodents. This would certainly support Jeffrey Grey's contention that the Canadians did not employ proper rubbish disposal methods.⁴³ This explanation becomes even more convincing when viewed in the context of the Commonwealth Division's haemorrhagic fever control program implemented in the fall of 1952. Perhaps the Canadians had finally seen too many of their number die unheroic and painful deaths, for the program was executed with a zeal seldom surpassed in the annals of Canadian military history.

The program outlined rigorous standards for food storage and refuse disposal, and enforced them through periodic inspections by the Division Hygiene Inspection

⁴²"Medical Problems - Korea, November - December 1950," NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-84/167, box 5210, file 3701-151/25, Medical Arrangements, CASF Part 1, 1.

⁴³Grey, *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War*, 150-153.

Team. Other measures included impregnating clothing with mite repellent (di-butyl-phthalate-DBF) at fortnightly intervals, and a front line rodent destruction plan. The expressed purpose of the plan was "to kill as many rats as possible within a short period and thereby eliminate any natural increase due to breeding."⁴⁴ To this end, breadmash, soaked rice or oatmeal was mixed with rat poison (Red Squill or Warfarin) and left at strategically situated "baiting points."⁴⁵ Each platoon maintained a record of these, along with the daily body count. Thousands of rodents were killed this way, their bodies burned just behind the forward positions in large fifty-five gallon drums.

Whatever the cause of the Canadians' seemingly high haemorrhagic fever rate, the No. 25 FDS statistics clearly point to a dramatic decrease in the number of cases from the fall of 1952 on: only three men were diagnosed with "the fever" between September 1952 and July 1953.⁴⁶ But while the Canadians were making dramatic inroads in the fight against haemorrhagic fever they were enjoying less success in their battle against that age-old ailment, venereal

⁴⁴"Rodent Control," Routine Daily Order Part 1, 8 May 1953, War Diary, 3 PPCLI, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,325, Appendix 3, 2-3.

⁴⁵"Rodent Control," 2.

⁴⁶Monthly Progress Reports, War Diary, No. 25 FDS, September 1952 to July 1953.

disease.

VENEREAL DISEASE

As already noted, early situation reports from the 2 PPCLI portended a fierce struggle with communicable diseases in general and venereal diseases in particular. In fact, during the battalion's first two months in the Far East 64 men, or 70 percent of all non-battle casualties, were treated for VD.⁴⁷ The Patricias' warning, however, fell on deaf ears. Not until early 1952, nine months after the arrival of the rest of the 25th CIB in Korea, did defence planners wake up to the reality of VD in the Far East. By then hundreds of Canadian troops had become infected, and the 25th Brigade found itself confronting a VD epidemic unparalleled in Canadian military history.

VD has a long, if not proud, tradition in the Canadian Army. The Canadian Corps had a higher rate of VD than any other belligerent army in the First World War, with one in nine soldiers becoming infected.⁴⁸ During the Second World War, the Canadian Army's VD rate remained relatively high, reaching a wartime peak of 68.4 per 1000 strength in 1945.⁴⁹

⁴⁷"Statistics - Korea, 20 March 1951."

⁴⁸Morton, *When Your Number's Up*, 200.

⁴⁹"CGS BDF 15-1-25 CIB Vol 6, period Apr 52 to Mar 53; Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 March 1952," DHist, file 112.009(D95), Appendix "D".

During its first two years in Korea, however, the 25th CIB's VD rate surpassed all of the above, peaking at an unbelievable 611 infections per 1000 strength per annum!⁵⁰ Thus, the VD rate among Canadian soldiers in Korea was ten times the Canadian overseas rate in 1945.

In view of the 25th CIB's VD problem, DND instructed the Defence Research Board (DRB) to conduct a statistical analysis of the cause and incidence of infection amongst Canadian troops. In initiating the DRB study, DND was less concerned with the moral fibre of Canadian troops in Korea than with the problem of personnel wastage from non-battle causes. The DRB analysis was, in fact, based on an earlier report prepared by the No. 1 CAORT, which had noted that one in three non-battle casualties were caused by VD.⁵¹ The DRB analysis may therefore be viewed as an extension of the CAORT report.

The DRB's analysis of VD in the 25th CIB was based on medical records obtained from the Directorate General, Medical Services (DGMS) between June 1951 and February 1952. The vast majority of the DGMS's records were in the form of nominal roles, which listed the name, number, rank, unit,

⁵⁰J. Eastcott and K.W. Smillie, Defence Research Board Operational Research Memorandum No. 26, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease Incidence Within 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group, October 1952," DHist, file 76/14.

⁵¹CAORT, "Notes on Operational Research in Korea, 18 April 1952," DHist, file 112.3W1013(D13), 13.

diagnosis, date of diagnosis, and place of contact for each case of VD; information relating to the use of condoms was obtained from the accompanying case record forms.⁵²

A veritable gold mine for the historian, the DRB report retained its original "Secret: For Canadian Eyes Only," security classification until 1976, when it was downgraded to "Restricted." For the next two decades the report languished in the Directorate of History's vault. In July 1995 the remaining restrictions on access were removed, and the DRB report became public property.

A logical place to begin an examination of the DRB's findings is with a comparison of Canadian, British and American VD rates during the first two years of the Korean War. If cases of non-specific urethritis (NSU) are excluded⁵³, the rates per 1000 per anum are: 25th CIB, 414; 28th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade and 29th Independent British Infantry Brigade, 387; American forces, 8th US Army, 208.⁵⁴ A comparison with Canadian troops stationed in other theatres is especially instructive. In

⁵²Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," DHist, file 76/14, Appendix "A".

⁵³As NSU is form of urethritis for which the presence of a specific virus or bacillus has not been detected, it is often excluded form VD rates. See Hazel Elliot and Kurt Ryz, *Venereal Diseases: Treatment and Nursing* (London: Bailliere and Tindall, 1972), 58-59.

⁵⁴Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," 2. If cases of NSU are included in the calculation of VD rates the margin between Canadian and British figures increases considerably.

February 1952, the 25th CIB's VD rate was *fifteen times* greater than that of the 27th Canadian Infantry Brigade in Germany.⁵⁵ Clearly, something was amiss in the Far East.⁵⁶

Within the 25th CIB, the DRD identified "significant differences between the VD incidence rates of the various units."⁵⁷ The difference in rates was not, as might be expected, between the allegedly footloose and fancy free units of the Special Force and the spit and polish regular units of the Active Force. Indeed, the DRB found no evidence that Special Force soldiers had a higher rate of VD than Active force personnel.⁵⁸ Rather, it was a case of teeth versus tail, with units situated in the rear having a much higher rate of VD than those at the sharp end. This was the result of support personnel having far more opportunities for contact with the local civilian population. The DRD report substantiates this assertion, identifying units of the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps, the Royal Canadian Engineers, Headquarters, 25 Canadian Infantry

⁵⁵Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," 2.

⁵⁶According to Canadian Operational Research Teams, the incidence of VD amongst the civilian population of the Far East was "much higher" than that of Europeans. See "CAORE Notes On Operational Research in Korea, by Mr. G.D. Kaye, 18 April 1952," DHist, file 112.3W1013(D13), 3.

⁵⁷"Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 March 1952," 1.

⁵⁸Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," 2.

Brigade, and the Royal Canadian Electric and Mechanical Engineers (in that order), as having the highest VD rates in the brigade.⁵⁹ All of these units were situated well-behind the front line, and their personnel had easy access to prostitutes, or "Sexy-Sexys", in the nearby cities of Seoul, Tokchon and Uijongbu.⁶⁰ As Private Jacket Coates explained, the support unit "guys are mobile. They get around the country, see? Into the rear areas. The infantry are stuck up here on the hills and have what you might call limited opportunity for play...."⁶¹

Though support units had the highest rate of VD in the 25th Brigade, most of the Canadian soldiers who actually contracted venereal infections were from the infantry units. Of these, the 2 R22eR was purported to have the lowest rate; however, there is some evidence to suggest that "a certain number of infections within the unit [were] not reported through the regular channels."⁶² In any event, by March 1952, 2 R22eR's VD rate had matched 1 PPCLI's and surpassed

⁵⁹"Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 March 1952," 1.

⁶⁰Private Burns Sexton, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 48.

⁶¹Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, 105. Commenting on Wood's novel, David Bercuson wrote: "The book has all the colour and atmosphere that *Strange Battleground* is lacking, and tells the story that Wood dared not write in the official history." See Granatstein and Bercuson, *War and Peacekeeping*, 105.

⁶²Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," 4.

2 RCR's.⁶³

Unlike their compatriots in support units, soldiers in the combat arms usually acquired VD while on leave in Japan. Each soldier was eligible for two, five day blocks of "special" R&R leave in Kure or Tokyo.⁶⁴ Often referred to half-jokingly as "rape and rampage," R&R was the highlight of the Canadian soldier's Far Eastern tour.

In contrast to the British and Australians, the Canadians did not open a leave centre in Japan until the last year of the war. Although they were more than welcome to use the British and Australian facilities, few Canadians wanted to spend their leave "eating mutton and listening to how great the British and Australians thought they were."⁶⁵ Not surprisingly, most elected to "make their own travel arrangements."⁶⁶ For months they had lived like beggars, endured the extremes of the Korean climate and faced the threat of sudden, violent death. Now, only 24 hours removed from the combat zone, they were free to choose where they stayed, how they ate, what they drank, and who they slept with.

R&R almost invariably began with a hot bath. The

⁶³Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," 2.

⁶⁴R&R leave was not chargeable against annual leave.

⁶⁵Anonymous soldier, 1 R22eR, interview, 15 July 1997.

⁶⁶Anonymous soldier, 1 R22eR, interview, 15 July 1997.

younger soldiers particularly appreciated the chance to clean themselves up as it had been several months since the last "zit patrol."⁶⁷ Next came the drinks and women. Neither was particularly hard to come by as Kure and Tokyo both contained extensive red light districts. For example, Kure's notorious red light district included: 115 licensed prostitute brokers, 54 beer halls and cabarets employing approximately 300 waitresses; 119 hotels with 357 chambermaids; 640 "tea shops" licensed to serve alcohol; six dance halls; countless massage parlours; and 24 "high-class" (for officers only) geisha houses.⁶⁸

The sights, sounds and smells of an Asian red light district were unlike anything the Canadians had ever experienced. Rickshaws jockeyed for position amid the flickering glow of neon light, as the din of a foreign language reverberated down the narrow alley-ways. The smell of putrid fish mixed with steam from boiling rice cauldrons, making the air heavy and oppressive. People filled the streets, exuding a carnival-like insouciance. Many were taken aback by the exoticism of their surroundings. One soldier characterized the prevailing attitude in the Kure as

⁶⁷Ron Trider, "R&R Leave," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 2.

⁶⁸"Wide Open City of Sin," *The Winnipeg Free Press*, 18 December 1952, 23.

being one of "Why fight?.... Drink and fuck instead."⁶⁹

Most Canadians did just that. According to Private Jacket Coates, Canadian soldiers "just lov[ed] screwing and they [did not] care what they screw[ed]."⁷⁰ With \$200.00 US burning a hole in their battledress pockets, few wasted any time on small talk or pleasantries.⁷¹ A soldier recalled:

You had a choice of girls at the hotel; I had three in rotation. On the last day of my leave, I was in a communal bath house and this gorgeous Japanese girl gives me the eye. The next thing I know we are up in her room. It cost me money, of course; no free sex in Japan or Korea.⁷²

Nor was sex necessarily worry free. Soldiers who did not take measures to protect themselves during their sexual forays often spent their first couple of weeks back in Korea wondering if they might have left Japan "with a permanent souvenir."⁷³

There were several different kinds of "souvenirs," although three were most common. In contrast to the First

⁶⁹Trooper David Cathcart, LDSH, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁷⁰Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, 104.

⁷¹Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 291-292.

⁷²Gunner Chester Nalewajik, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 294.

⁷³"Report by Lieutenant-Colonel DSF Bult-Francis, AG Rep on AHQ Team, On Visit to Japan and Korea, 2 July - 4 August 195251," DHist, file 112.009(D87), 6. The DRB report found that venereal disease rates among the Japanese were ten times those of North Americans. See Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease Incidence in 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade Group," 2.

and Second World Wars, syphilis, the most serious type of STD before the appearance of HIV, was rarely encountered. According to the DRB's findings, syphilis accounted for only 1.4 percent of the 25th Brigade's venereal infections.⁷⁴ Gonorrhea, on the other hand, was a major problem, accounting for 33.1 percent of all Canadian VD cases.⁷⁵ Soldiers infected with the gonococcus bacillus, the causative organism of the disease, became acutely aware of their predicament three to seven days after sexual contact.⁷⁶ The first manifestation of the disease assumed the form of a greenish stain in the soldier's underwear. If this was not enough to convince him to seek medical treatment, the next symptom most certainly would. As the disease progressed, the meatus of the soldier in question would swell, making urination difficult and extremely painful; some likened the process to "pissing fire."⁷⁷ By this stage, the infected soldier would be compelled to seek medical attention, thus becoming a non-battle casualty.

The second most prevalent form of venereal disease in the 25th CIB was NSU, accounting for 32.3 percent of all

⁷⁴Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," Annexure B.

⁷⁵Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease."

⁷⁶Elliott and Ryz, *Venereal Disease*, 44-45.

⁷⁷Ibid., 46.

infections.⁷⁸ Those unfortunates infected with NSU became painfully aware of their condition four weeks after contact, and experienced some of the same symptoms as their compatriots with gonorrhoea.⁷⁹ Soldiers diagnosed with NSU were instructed to avoid alcoholic beverages during treatment -- no mean feat for a soldier in the 25th CIB. Apparently, alcohol increased the rate of relapse in NSU cases.⁸⁰

Chancroid, the third most common form of VD in the Korean theatre of operations, accounted for thirty percent of all Canadian cases.⁸¹ Rare in Europe and North America, chancroid was endemic in the Far East. Not surprisingly, Canadian medical officers had little experience treating the disease.⁸² To make matters worse, chancroid patients required from five to fifteen days hospitalization.⁸³ Thus, "in comparison with other types of VD chancroid [was] the

⁷⁸Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," Annexure B.

⁷⁹Elliot and Ryz, *Venereal Disease*, 59.

⁸⁰Ibid., 60.

⁸¹Eastcott and Smillie, "A Statistical Investigation of Venereal Disease," 2.

⁸²"Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 March 1952," 1.

⁸³"Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 Mar 52," 1.

cause of a considerable amount of time lost from duty."⁸⁴

From the figures presented above, it is apparent that syphilis, gonorrhea, NSU and chancroid accounted for 98.6 percent of all Canadian VD cases. Commonwealth Division records indicate that the remaining 3.2 per cent of cases encompassed a host of minor venereal ailments, such as balantitis (white blisters on the glans penis), penal warts and inflammation of the foreskin.⁸⁵

Treatment of VD was determined by the type of infection and severity. Sixty percent of gonorrhea cases were successfully treated with penicillin at the RAP by the "one/two shot" method.⁸⁶ Cases requiring further treatment joined those diagnosed with NSU at the No. 25 Canadian FDS, where they were given a five day course of Sulfa drugs.⁸⁷ Patients undergoing Sulfa treatment were also ordered to drink six pints of fluid daily to prevent kidney complications. Chancroid, as we have seen, almost invariably involved prolonged hospitalization, as patients required routine blood surveillance.

⁸⁴"Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 March 1952," 1.

⁸⁵1 COMWEL Div 6318/MED, Miscellaneous File Stripping of DAA and QMG, DHist, file 410.B25.059(D1); Hazel and Ryz, *Venereal Diseases*, 72.

⁸⁶"VD Treatment Policy, 13 July 1951," Miscellaneous File Stripping of DAA and QMG, DHist, file 410B25.059(D1), 1.

⁸⁷"VD Treatment Policy, 13 July 1951," 1.

Chancroid notwithstanding, the treatment of VD in Korea posed no major challenges to the professional skills of Canadian medical officers.⁸⁸ Part of this success can be attributed to the low number of syphilitic cases encountered in the Far East. However, the widespread use of antibiotics ultimately made the effective treatment of VD possible.

Antibiotics made their battlefield debut during the Second World War, and by the time of Korea were in the medicine chest of every major UN army. Their use in the treatment of a host of previously fatal infections quickly earned antibiotics the dubious title of "wonder drugs." However, not everyone at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa thought they were so wonderful. Shortly after replacing Lieutenant-General Foulkes as Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds wrote:

It seems to be in the nature of things that the men in the [25th] brigade will continue to expose themselves to the dangers of VD regardless of preventative medicines, and they rely on penicillin as a cure-all for the results of their folly.⁸⁹

In singling out the liberal use of antibiotics as the reason for the 25th Brigade's high VD rate, Simmonds was ignoring the failure of his own department. British and American soldiers presumably found Asian prostitutes just as

⁸⁸Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC in the Korean War," 8.

⁸⁹Lieutenant-General G.G. Simonds to the Minister of National Defence, Brooke Claxton, 2 September 1952, "Canadian Army Special Force Statistics as of 31 March 1952," 2.

inviting, nor were there any differences in the use of antibiotics in those armies.⁹⁰ Yet, the British and Americans were able to maintain a VD rate that was consistently lower than that of the Canadians.

Under intense pressure from Ottawa to bring the 25th Brigade's VD problem under control, Brigadier Rockingham issued orders in early April 1952 that any soldier who contracted VD during the last ninety days of his tour would have to serve an additional three months in Korea. Rockingham later admitted that he did not have the legal authority to issue the order, but justified his actions by claiming that his "idea worked very well and the [VD] figure dropped at once."⁹¹ However, Commonwealth Division VD statistics tell a different story. By June 1952, the 25th Brigade's VD rate was the same as it had been before the announcement of the VD rotation policy.⁹² Moreover, as Korean veteran and author Robert Hepenstall observed:

All units ignored this order, except the infantry; it was another shameful means of keeping men in the line for another three months. The rule applied only to the lower ranks; no officer of any regiment or corps served an extra three months for contracting venereal

⁹⁰Dr. Joseph Leichester, MD, interview, Kelowna, British Columbia, August 19, 1997. Dr. Leichester was with the RCAMC at the time of the Korean War.

⁹¹Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 78. Commenting on the obvious illegality of the order, Rockingham smugly stated, "who was to argue with me?"

⁹²"Appendix 'F' to Monthly Liaison Letter - Sept 52: VD Rates Monthly," PRO, WO file 281/887, 1.

disease.⁹³

Once again, the soldiers in the firing line suffered most from their superiors' ignorance. Facing a three month extension of their Korean tour, many infantrymen hid their condition until they were safely on board the troopship back to Canada.⁹⁴ A soldier recalled:

I had an infection in my urinary tract.... On the boat going home, I heard there was an American doctor taking sick parade. What a shock; the sick parade line up extended half way around the boat, all Canadians....⁹⁵

By the late fall of 1952, the 25th Brigade's VD rate finally started to decline.⁹⁶ This was not, however, the result of the illegal VD rotation policy; rather, after a year's service with the First Commonwealth Division, the 25th Brigade was starting to learn how to handle its VD problem, just as it had to a lesser extent with haemorrhagic fever. With years of operational experience in Asia, the British Army had developed a number of preventative measures to combat the spread of VD. As an integral part of the Commonwealth Division, the 25th Brigade was able to draw on British experience and reduce its VD

⁹³Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 261-262.

⁹⁴"VAG Liaison Visit, Far East, 29 October 1952 - Medical Aspects," Adjutant General Branch, War Diary, NAC RG 24, Volume 18,224, October 1952, Appendix A, 2.

⁹⁵Anonymous soldier quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 262.

⁹⁶"Appendix 'D' to Monthly Liaison Report, No. 21 for December 1952," PRO, WO 281/888, 3.

rate. Thus, the 25th Brigade's struggle with VD during the first two years of the Korean War can be attributed to a lack of operational experience in a Far Eastern context and inadequate preventative measures.

Prior to the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula, the Canadian Army had little operational experience in Asia. Two infantry battalions had participated briefly in the doomed defence of Hong Kong in late-1941, but with this obvious exception few Canadians served in the Far East during the Second World War. It is, however, interesting to note that "the only serious [medical] problem during [the Hong Kong deployment] was the incidence of venereal disease which... threaten[ed] to impair the fighting efficiency of the force."⁹⁷ The Canadians' inexperience in the Far East was reflected in the 25th CIB's training lectures on hygiene. Of the 300 lecture periods the soldiers of the brigade attended during their basic training, only five were allocated to personal hygiene.⁹⁸ Of these, maybe one might be allocated to a discussion of VD; the remainder dealt with issues such as how to defecate in the field, brushing one's teeth in the combat zone and foot care in a "cold-wet" climate. Indeed, an Adjutant-General's report identified a "lack of

⁹⁷MacNalty and Mellor, *Medical Services In War*, 501.

⁹⁸"Second Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, Basic Rifle Wing -- Block Syllabus," PPCLI Archives, box 130-1, file 130(5)-1.

education" as "the principal" cause "of the high VD rate" in the 25th Brigade.⁹⁹ To make matters worse, when the Canadians deployed to Korea they did so without the support of a specially trained VD unit.¹⁰⁰ Apparently, defence planners in Ottawa did not believe VD would be a major cause of non-battle casualties in Korea.

Compared to the Canadian Army, the British Army had a wealth of operational experience in the Far East.¹⁰¹ Based on this knowledge, the British, and by extension the First Commonwealth Division, instituted a number of preventative measures that reached the peak of their effectiveness by the fall of 1952. The first of these was a comprehensive VD training program, carried out under the auspices of the No. 10 Field Hygiene Section.¹⁰² The program consisted of a day-long series of lectures. Only officers and NCOs were permitted to attend, the idea being that they would take their newly acquired knowledge of VD back to their respective units. The senior chaplain usually made a brief appearance at these lectures to remind students of the moral

⁹⁹"Venereal Disease - Far East, 4 November 1952," War Diary, Adjutant-General Branch, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,224, November 1952, 1.

¹⁰⁰"CAORE Notes On Operational Research In Korea," 3.

¹⁰¹See, for example, the discussion of VD in the British War Office publication, *Handbook of Army Health (1950)*, WO 5691.

¹⁰²"VD Treatment, 1 COMWEL DIV 6318/MED, 16 October 1952," PRO, WO 281/887, 1.

issues surrounding the acquisition of VD. According to an official Commonwealth Division report, the chaplain's "section particularly was well received by the students."¹⁰³

The second preventative measure adopted by the Commonwealth Division was to restrict the movement of personnel in rear areas, and to reduce the number of Korean prostitutes in nearby villages.¹⁰⁴ To this end, the No. 1 Commonwealth Provost Company conducted routine vice raids on nearby towns and villages. While vice raids did not reduce the incidence of VD among soldiers returning from R&R in Japan, they did help lower the VD rate in support units. Reporting on a "successful" raid, the Commonwealth war diarist wrote:

Vice raid carried out in SINSAN NI during late afternoon, four prostitutes apprehended and handed over to [Field] Security [Section] for disposal.... US serviceman apprehended in Korean dwelling in company of prostitute, reported accordingly.¹⁰⁵

Rounding out the Commonwealth Division's approach to VD control was the creation of preventative stations around leave centres and base areas.¹⁰⁶ No questions were asked at

¹⁰³Colonel G.L. Morgan Smith, ADMS 1 Commonwealth Division, to Commander, 25 Canadian Infantry Brigade, 16 October 1952, PRO, WO 281/887, 2.

¹⁰⁴"VD Treatment, 1 COMWEL DIV 6318/MED, 16 Oct 52," PRO, WO 281/887, 1.

¹⁰⁵War Diary, No. 25 Canadian Provost Detachment, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,427, 11 February 1953.

¹⁰⁶*Handbook of Army Health (1950)*, WO 5691, 84.

the time of admission,¹⁰⁷ and soldiers were instructed to:

1. Scrub the hands thoroughly with soap and water.
2. Pass water in short, sharp gushes, holding the urine back by pinching the top of the penis and letting go with a rush.
3. Remove trousers and underpants, and tuck up your shirt.
4. Wash thoroughly with soap and water the genitals, especially under the foreskin, the thighs and lower abdomen. Continue to wash these parts for five minutes.
5. Dry the genitals, thighs and abdomen with the paper towel provided.
6. Take the ointment provided and rub well onto the genitals and surrounding areas, pull back the foreskin and rub onto the glans (knob), and under the foreskin, be sure that the ointment is applied to the whole of the genital area including the scrotum. Continue for five minutes.
7. Wrap the genitals in a paper towel, do not wash these parts again for at least six hours.

DO NOT PUT OINTMENT INTO THE PIPE¹⁰⁸

These measures did not guarantee that a soldier would not develop a venereal infection but they could, if carried out immediately after exposure, reduce the chances.¹⁰⁹ However, Canadian infantrymen who developed VD in the last 90 days of their tour still faced an additional three month's service in the Far East.

¹⁰⁷"Routine Daily Order Part 1, 27 October 1952," War Diary, 1 PPCLI, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,316, October 1952, Appendix 56, 4.

¹⁰⁸"PAC Instructions," War Diary, Canadian Military Mission Far East, NAC, Volume 18,441, February 1954, Appendix 1.

¹⁰⁹Dr. Michael Yandel, MD (retired), interview, Kelowna, BC, 17 November 1997.

Finally, the Canadians followed the British and Australian examples and opened a leave centre in Tokyo known as the Maple Leaf Club.¹¹⁰ This provided the Canadian atmosphere that was clearly lacking in the British and Australian centres, and was quite popular with the soldiers of the 25th Brigade, as "the amenities included a reading room, snack bar, guided tours, shopping service, wet canteens, etc."¹¹¹ There can be no question that the Maple Leaf Club kept some soldiers out of the red light districts, and reduced their exposure to VD.¹¹² Indeed, an Adjutant-General's report suggested that the high VD rate and instances of disorderly conduct among Canadian troops in Japan "could have been avoided if [the Maple Leaf Club] had been available" from the outset.¹¹³

Though the Canadians never quite succeeded in bringing

¹¹⁰It is not clear why the Canadians took so long to follow the British and Australian examples. It may be, as Jeffrey Grey suggested, that the Canadians tended to keep to themselves, and avoided direct liaison with other Commonwealth officers at divisional headquarters. See Grey, *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War*, 151.

¹¹¹Welfare Facilities in the Far East, 5 December 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 2.

¹¹²The Vice-Adjutant-General, Brigadier J.W. Bishop, believed "that a good deal of the VD rate can be attributed to men who had no intention whatsoever of getting themselves into trouble but did not realize the effect of the surroundings to which they were exposed." See "Venereal Disease - Far East, 4 November 1952," 2.

¹¹³"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel Bult-Francis, 10 August 1951," 5.

their VD rate down to British or American levels, by the end of the war VD was no longer the threat that it had once been. Indeed, by July 1953 the Canadian rate had plummeted to 416 infections (including NSU) per 1000 strength per annum -- a significant improvement over the 610 infections recorded only a year earlier.¹¹⁴ Credit for reducing the 25th Brigade's VD rate must go to the British. Without British direction, it is highly unlikely that the 25th Brigade would have been able to bring its VD problem under control by war's end.

CONCLUSION

Summing up the Canadian epidemiological experience in Korea, a medical officer concluded that the "conflict may have been a localized war but it was a dirty, difficult one."¹¹⁵ As this chapter has shown, the silent battle against disease was anything but easy. From the outset, the Canadians were clearly not prepared to deal with the epidemiological dimension of service in the Far East. Although treatment tended to improve with experience, it is likely that the struggle with disease would have been even more difficult had the Canadians not been able to draw on

¹¹⁴"Appendix 'C' to Monthly Liaison Letter for July 53," PRO, WO 281/888, 3.

¹¹⁵Hunter and Andrew, "The RCAMC and the Korean War," 13.

British experience. In the end, it was the lowly soldier in the firing line who paid the price for this unpreparedness. From needless hemorrhagic fever deaths to a patently unfair VD rotation policy, the Canadian infantryman faced the consequences of improper planning and preparation -- in addition to the threat of imminent death from enemy action -- on an almost daily basis. Canadian unpreparedness was not, however, confined to disease prevention. Nor was much forethought given to the provision of basic comfort items and amenities to help assuage the hardships of life in the field.

CHAPTER TEN

LIFE IN THE FIELD

Compared to their compatriots in the rear, the infantry led a life of extreme hardship and deprivation in Korea.¹ While most support personnel enjoyed three squares a day, slept in proper beds, and could look forward to such things as regular mail service and the occasional live show, the soldiers in the firing line lived like tramps without even the most basic comforts or amenities.

FOOD

One indication of a soldier's proximity to the sharp end was the type of food he ate and the manner in which it was consumed. Soldiers in the rear seldom ate pre-packaged

¹The disparity in living conditions between the soldiers of the 25th Brigade and those of the 27th Brigade in Germany was even greater. An Adjutant-General's report noted that "the brigade in Germany... can make use of civilian facilities in adjacent towns. Further, living conditions, i.e. tents, services and climate compare very unfavourably with those in Germany... where modern barrack accommodation, services and heat are provided. Further, the serviceman in Korea is separated from his dependents whereas elsewhere dependants can, or will in the very near future, accompany the servicemen. Further, there is a constant tension created by the continuous standing-to in battle position to fend off a possible attack. The hazards of health are far greater in this primitive Asiatic country than in Western Europe. Further, there is no contact with people and customs of the Western civilization." See "Welfare Facilities in the Far East, 13 January 1954," NAC, RG 24, Volume 4904, file 3125-33/29, Part 6, 2.

combat rations, whereas men in the firing line often subsisted on them for extended periods. The combat, or "hard," rations used by the 25th Brigade in Korea were the infamous American C-rations. During the latter stages of the Second World War, Canadian fighting men had largely subsisted on British-type composite rations. These had been developed in the early-1940s to replace the traditional, but immensely unhealthy, battlefield diet of bully beef and hardtack biscuits. A "'Compo' pack contained the ingredients for the daily meal of fourteen men, though where necessary it might have to provide one man with 14 day's food, two with seven or whatever combination seemed easiest."² Compo meals were all tinned and included traditional English fare like bacon, bangers, Irish stew, steak and kidney pie, pudding, fruit, butter, cheese, and jam.³ Rounding out the compo rations was an accessory pack containing cigarettes, matches, toilet paper, candies and a small solid-fuel cooker.

As with so many other things, the Canadian Army was deficient in compo rations at the outbreak of the Korean War. This led to the decision to feed the soldiers of the 25th Brigade with American C-rations. Thus for the first time in Canadian military history, Canadian soldiers would officially eat American-style foods in combat.

²Ellis, *Sharp End of War*, 275.

³Ibid.

Not all of the soldiers in the 25th Brigade were impressed with the new American grub.⁴ Like the earlier compo meals, C-rations were packaged in tins. Unlike compo meals, they were packaged in small cardboard boxes for individual issue. Each individual C-ration pack contained two cans: "one of which contained a vegetable and meat combo, the other instant coffee, sugar, and nine biscuits."⁵ With the switch to American C-rations the social aspect of cooking and eating was partially eroded. This was particularly irksome to the veterans in the brigade who were accustomed to the banter and comradeship that accompanied the breakdown and preparation of compo meals. Moreover, the self-contained C-rations complicated cooking in forward areas. Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell complained that "the C-ration is far from the ideal ration in static warfare. I feel that something in the nature of the last war compo pack where cooking could be done on a group basis, say section or half section, would be preferable."⁶

C-ration menus were not completely to Canadian tastes.⁷

⁴Peacock, *Kim-Chi, Asahi and Rum*, 89.

⁵Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 94.

⁶"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 5. Also see "Report by Mr. A.R. Menzies of the Department of External Affairs On Impressions of His Visit to the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade in Korea, 12-17 October 1951," DHist, file 681.001(D1), 16.

⁷Peacock, *Kim-Chi, Asahi and Rum*, 89.

While weiners and beans and spaghetti and meatballs were popular with Canadian troops, turkey loaf and ham and lima beans, or "ham and motherfuckers" in military parlance,⁸ definitely were not. During the Battle of Kap'yong, for example, the famished soldiers of 2 PPCLI left their airdropped stocks of ham and lima beans largely untouched.⁹ Later in the war, "rewards were posted" in the third battalions for any recipe which would make ham and lima beans edible.¹⁰ Predictably, Canadian soldiers attempted to pawn off their tins of turkey loaf and ham and lima beans to their Commonwealth allies. For some inexplicable reason, the New Zealanders often accepted these unpopular entrées in trade for their coveted compo tins of cheese and butter.¹¹

Like the earlier compo meals, C-rations were accompanied by an accessory pack. With the possible exception of the toilet paper, few of the items or brands were suited to Canadian tastes. American cigarettes were not especially popular with Canadian troops, although there were few smokers in the Brigade who would decline a Lucky Strike or a Marlboro in a pinch. American pipe tobacco was also included in each accessory pack, even though the total

⁸Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁹"Kap'yong Remembered," 28.

¹⁰Peacock, *Kim-Chi, Asahi and Rum*, 89.

¹¹Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 151.

number of Canadian pipe smokers was estimated to be less than 200.¹² Another superfluous accessory was the old-fashioned Gem razor blades. As straight-razors were not issued to the soldiers of the 25th Brigade, the Gems were totally useless.¹³ A final complaint about the American accessory pack was the manner in which the contents were arranged. Lieutenant Bob Peacock recalled that the Hershey Bars "were packed in the box next to the soap whose taste permeated the chocolate. This simple placement has, unfairly, influenced my selection of chocolate bars ever since."¹⁴

Another problem with C-rations was their susceptibility to temperature extremes. In hot weather, the unappetizing layer of fat that surrounded such culinary favourites as turkey loaf melted, saturating the entree and leaving soldiers with a greasy film on the roofs of their mouths. In extremely cold weather, the fat could be scraped off, but the entre itself often froze solid. There were few things more demoralizing to a cold and hungry man than the prospect of eating a frozen C-ration meal with the shape and

¹²"Purchase of Pipes and Pipe Tobacco, January 1951," Welfare - Cigarettes and Tobacco - Troops in Far East, NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4912, file 3127-33/29, Part 1.

¹³Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 90.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

consistency of a hockey puck.¹⁵ With hunger being the only other alternative, soldiers went to extraordinary lengths to defrost their C-rations. The easiest way to heat a C-ration meal was to hold it over a burning solid fuel tablet. However, these could not be used in bunkers or other confined spaces due to the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning. In the fighting positions, C-ration tins were warmed in the pockets of parkas or windproof trousers, or, if a soldier was desperate, under an armpit or in the crutch.

The unpalatability of C-rations notwithstanding, they could also cause acute diarrhea and severe gastrointestinal discomfort when consumed for extended periods. An American study conducted during the Second World War found that "the daily deficiency for troops subsisting only on C-rations was estimated to be between 400 and 1,800 calories."¹⁶ During the Battle of Chail-li, several soldiers in the 2 RCR fell ill after subsisting strictly on C-rations for several days. The battalion after action report warned that "it is not recommended that C-rations be used at all times," because they are "much less satisfactory than A or B" rations.¹⁷

Fortunately for the Canadians, A and B, or "fresh"

¹⁵Corporal Earl Richardson, 1/3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 152.

¹⁶Ellis, *The Sharp End of War*, 281-281,

¹⁷Memorandum, Historical Section, Army Headquarters, Ottawa, 18 January 1952, DHist, file 145.2R13013(D2), 7.

rations were frequently available in forward areas, providing a welcome respite from the gastrointestinal discomfort and monotony of American C-rations. These were drawn from a variety of sources. Staples included lamb from New Zealand, hamburger patties, bacon and pork chops from the United States, bread from the Commonwealth Division bakery, and vegetables grown on special hydroponic farms in Japan.¹⁸ The palatability of these rations was largely dependent on the acumen and technical expertise of the cook who prepared them. Prepared in company kitchens, and transported to the front line in hayboxes on the backs of KSC porters, soldiers waited in trepidation to taste the cook's latest creation. Some companies, notably those in the 3 PPCLI, were renowned for their excellent food. Others suffered in silent anguish as they choked-down flaccid pork chops and shrivelled potatoes, the flavour and texture literally boiled out of them.

Even well-prepared rations could become unappetizing by the time they reached the front line. Hayboxes seldom kept the food warm during the winter, and the standard issue mess tin was "not the best designed piece of equipment."¹⁹ The rectangular, two-and-a-half inch deep, aluminum mess tin was designed to double as both a frying pan and a plate.

¹⁸Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 19. Local vegetables were considered unsafe.

¹⁹Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 89.

Without a partition, the various components of a meal spilled together into one unappetizing mess. Equally ineffective were the standard-issue knife, fork, and spoon, or, "gobbling irons."²⁰ "Badly designed," with "nothing fitting with anything," Canadian soldiers frequently lost their knives and forks, and, more importantly, their spoons.²¹ The loss of something so mundane as a spoon passed unnoticed in the rear. At the front, where it was used for digging, prying, tightening screws, and chipping ice and snow, in addition to its more conventional role as an eating utensil, the spoon was counted as "one of the infantryman's basic tools."²²

Rear echelon personnel need not worry about inadequate eating equipment; their meals were normally dished up on proper settings. They were also spared the rigors of masticating frozen C-rations, and the suspense which accompanied the opening of a haybox. For them, good, fresh food prepared by some of the best cooks in the Brigade was the norm. With their quarters situated behind the front line, they had plenty of opportunities to supplement their official rations with wild game.²³ The Korean countryside

²⁰Temporary Receipt of Artifacts, Compiled by B.A.J. Franklin, 12 September 1991, PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

²¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 5.

²²Hackworth, *About Face*, 172-173.

²³Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 53.

possessed an abundance of wildlife, and a successful hunt might translate into roast venison or baked pheasant.

The closest the lowly soldier in the firing line came to savouring such delicacies was during Christmas when a turkey dinner was served to all ranks. The tactical situation permitting, soldiers were brought down from their hilltop positions in rotation to enjoy their festive meal. The hundreds of turkeys required to feed the Brigade were obtained from the Americans, who were, it was rumoured, using Korea as a dumping ground for frozen birds left over from the last war. Despite the dubious origins of the Canadians' turkey dinners, most wolfed them down like men possessed.

ACCOMMODATION

Just as unappetizing food contributed to the discomfort of life in the field so did the primitive bivouac arrangements. When the fighting was mobile, soldiers simply slept under a poncho fashioned into a crude shelter using local materials like sticks and rocks. Such spartan accommodation was uncomfortable to say the least. The open-floored lay-out did not deter snakes or rodents,²⁴ and during the monsoon season water streamed through as if

²⁴"What You May See in Korea," War Diary, 1 PPCLI, May 1952, Appendix "A", 1.

passing under a bridge.

The lack of an official-issue camp mattress added to the discomfort.²⁵ A proper sleeping pad is essential to curtail radiant heat loss to the ground, and its absence meant that men woke up colder, not to mention stiffer, than would otherwise have been the case. In especially cold weather, such as that experienced by the 2 PPCLI in late-January 1951, soldiers improvised by lining their poncho shelters with pine boughs or rice straw.²⁶

Further contributing to the misery of life in the field was the prohibition on sleeping bags in the front line. Indeed, men forward of "A" echelon were expressly forbidden to have a sleeping bag in their possession.²⁷ A design flaw made it impossible for a man to rapidly extricate himself from the Canadian-issue sleeping bag in an emergency.²⁸ The US Army-issue sleeping bag suffered from a similar flaw, but this did not dissuade some American troops from using it. The results were catastrophic. In February 1951 the 2 PPCLI came across the bodies of 65 American soldiers of the 2nd Reconnaissance Company.²⁹ The Americans had zipped

²⁵"Equipment, General, 25th CIB, Volume 1."

²⁶Bill Boss, "PPCLI Engage in Hard Training," *Calgary Herald*, 22 January 1951, 2.

²⁷"Q Notes," War Dairy, 1 PPCLI, May 1952.

²⁸"Q Notes," War Diary, 1 PPCLI, May 1952.

²⁹War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 19 February 1951.

themselves into their sleeping bags and gone to sleep without digging defensive positions or posting sentries. During the night they had been surprised by the Chinese. All of the Americans were promptly bayoneted where they lay, their sleeping bags becoming body bags. The skewered Americans convinced the remaining Canadian sceptics that perhaps it was best to leave their sleeping bags "in the rear with the gear." For the duration of the war, Canadian fighting men did just that, providing the "rear echelon commandos" with a convenient medium of exchange on the black market. Meanwhile, soldiers in the firing line shivered under flimsy wool blankets. Issued on a scale of three per man, they "were not considered adequate from the warmth point of view."³⁰

Living in the field under a poncho, soldiers became dirtier than beggars. Mosquito repellent, camouflage cream, sweat, and dirt combined to form a greasy film that covered the skin and assailed the nostrils. Underclothes became crusty with the accumulated filth of living rough. Diarrhoea, which "everyone in Korea got... sooner or later," was a constant annoyance, leading some men to forgo underwear altogether.³¹

Aside from the occasional visit to the mobile bath unit, there were few opportunities to wash oneself in the

³⁰"Q Notes, 9 May 1952," 1 PPCLI, 2.

³¹Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 14.

field. Rivers were used for bathing whenever possible, but this could be dangerous during the monsoon season when flash floods created powerful currents: eight Canadian soldiers are officially listed as having drowned.³² Creeks provided another source of water for bathing. However, as George Cook discovered, a wash in a Korean creek did not necessarily make one feel cleaner. After washing his face and brushing his teeth in what appeared to be a pristine mountain creek, Cook was shocked to discover the decomposed bodies of two Chinese soldiers just upstream from where he had been bathing!³³

Opportunities for bathing improved somewhat with the occupation of the *Jamestown* line. Crude showers were built just behind the front line, and bath parades were held at regular intervals. Proper latrines were also constructed in the forward areas, although the increased comfort was largely negated by the smell and clouds of flies that hung over them. Where soldiers had previously practised "cat sanitation" -- defecating into shallow holes scratched into the earth -- they now visited "the library."³⁴ Located at the end of a narrow communications trench, "the Library," contained both toilets and urinals. The former were usually constructed out of discarded 45 gallon oil drums. The drum

³²"Canadian Army Fatal Casualties, Korean War."

³³Corporal George Cook, interview, 24 June 1994.

³⁴Miscellaneous file, the "Higham Papers."

was cut open at each end, and the bottom dug into a hole in the ground. A donut-shaped piece of plywood placed on top of the drum served as the seat. "This made an excellent latrine."³⁵ Urinals, also known as "piss tubes," were fashioned out of empty mortar casings. Normally four feet in length, the long, metal tubes were between eight and ten inches in circumference -- "the right size to accommodate us all," a soldier in the PPCLI commented.³⁶ One end of the tube was dug into the ground; the other was angled upwards, the exact height being determined by the Regimental Sanitary Man.

The RSM was also responsible for the maintenance and cleanliness of the latrines. Each morning he inspected the battalion's forward latrines, spreading lime and creosote where necessary. To control the musty odour emanating from the urinals a small amount of gasoline was occasionally poured down the tubes and lit. Assuming that all of the gas in the tube ignited, this practice was reasonably safe. When it did not, the tube became a time bomb. On one occasion, a sergeant from the 3 PPCLI with bushy eyebrows and moustache dropped a still smoldering cigarette end down a tube containing unburnt gasoline. A fire-ball belched out of the tube, singeing all of the unwitting Sergeant's facial

³⁵"Korea Outdoor Plumbing," Temporary Receipt of Artifacts, Compiled by B.A.J. Franklin, PPCLI, 12 September 1991, PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

³⁶"Korea Outdoor Plumbing."

hair. Miraculously, no other part of his anatomy was affected by the blast.³⁷

The shift to static warfare also brought about changes in bivouac arrangements. Soldiers were henceforth accommodated in "sleeping" bunkers just behind their fighting positions. A soldier described the construction of an "ideal" bunker:

[The bunker] began as a large hole, with smaller holes at its edges to hold the log frame. The logs were brought up from the rear and fastened together with spikes and communications-wire lashings. More logs made up the roof, and both the roof and sides were covered with sandbags.³⁸

Designed to hold two to four men, "a good bunker could resist repeated direct hits by 60mm mortar shells."³⁹ Unfortunately for the Canadians, few of their bunkers lived up to the ideal. Robert Hepenstall, an engineer in Korea, described the average Canadian bunker as a "hovel," that "offered very little protection from artillery fire," and was prone to collapse in heavy rains.⁴⁰ 1 PPCLI's Sergeant John Richardson concurred, identifying a lack of building materials as the primary reason for their shoddy construction. During a severe storm in April 1952, a

³⁷"Korea Outdoor Plumbing."

³⁸William Weir, "Sandbag Redoubt Defended," *Military History* (October 1992), 70. Weir was a public information NCO with the American Army in Korea.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁰Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 134, 170.

platoon in his battalion had all but three of their 14 bunkers collapse *in a single day*.⁴¹ "Most of the material went to the rear areas," he recalled, "both for the construction of rear defences and the comfort of rear area troops.... The forward areas were always short of... construction material."⁴²

Shortages extended into other areas. As mentioned earlier, proper field stoves were practically non-existent in the front line. Also in short supply were cots and chairs -- items that proliferated in the rear but seldom seen in the austere surroundings of the *Jamestown* line. On the other hand, the forward areas possessed an abundance of discarded signal wire. Used to connect the hand-cranked field telephones in the fighting positions to a central switchboard in the rear, signal wire criss-crossed through the trenches for miles like a giant spider's web. Extremely vulnerable to shell fire, the exposed cables were damaged with annoying regularity. Rather than dispatch a linesman to locate and repair the offending cable, the Canadians adopted the simple expedient of laying a new line. Experience had shown this to be "simpler and safer" while under fire.⁴³

⁴¹Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 21.

⁴²Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 135.

⁴³Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 88.

It did not take long for the more imaginative soldiers in the 25th Brigade to find a use for the nests of abandoned signal wire that accumulated in their positions. Using angle iron pickets driven into the floor of the bunker as a frame, the signal wire was interlaced until a crude box-spring bed was formed. At 25 cents a foot, the troops liked to joke that "they had the most expensive beds in the world."⁴⁴ A similar method was used to make chairs.

Rounding out the well-furnished front line bunker was a ration crate table, a signal wire clothes line, an improvised stove, and a door fashioned out of a scrounged poncho or blanket. Interior illumination was provided by a candle jammed into a C-ration tin.

Ration crates were also used to construct crude floors, although soldiers who were afraid of rats or snakes might question their desirability. The space between the floor boards and the barren earth provided the ideal habit for a variety of Korean fauna, but rats and snakes were the most common.

The role of rats in the spread of epidemic haemorrhagic fever has already been noted. Disease aside, rats made life inside the claustrophobic confines of a forward bunker uncomfortable to say the least. Men returned to their bunkers after a hard day's work to find rat feces in their kit, on their bed, and on their furniture. Rat urine was

⁴⁴Weir, "Sandbag Redoubt Defended," 71.

equally disgusting, leaving the Canadians' bunkers smelling musty and pungent. But there was worse. Corporal Earl Richardson explained:

[The rats] came out at night. They ran around squeaking and squealing above your head. They knocked dirt on you, and would occasionally drop on you. It was necessary to keep a blanket over your head when sleeping to keep them away from your face. There wasn't too much air in the bunkers, so it was an added discomfort. One fellow jumped up from a sound sleep and hollered; we lit a candle and found a rat had taken a bite out of the nape of his neck.⁴⁵

With the rats came the snakes. Of the 12 varieties of snakes indigenous to Korea, two are poisonous. Like the North American rattlesnake, they belong to the pit viper family. Their bites are potentially fatal, but with prompt and effective treatment deaths are rare. At least two 25th Brigade soldiers were bitten, but no Canadians died from snake bites during the Korean War.⁴⁶ To avoid a bite, soldiers were advised to shake all clothing before putting it on, and "to kill those encountered."⁴⁷

DAILY ROUTINE

Eating, scrounging, and, with the occupation of the

⁴⁵Corporal Earl Richardson, 1/3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 321.

⁴⁶See "Monthly Reports," No.25 Canadian FDS, War Diary, NAC, Volume 18,396, October 1952 to July 1953.

⁴⁷"What You May See in Korea," 1.

Jamestown line, constructing field expedient furniture and killing snakes, accounted for only a small portion of the Canadian infantryman's daily routine. Life in the front line did not simply revolve around filling one's stomach or thinking up creative uses for surplus signal wire. When not engaged in active combat, a seemingly endless array of menial fatigue duties demanded soldiers' constant attention. Together, these duties conspired to create a monotonous existence that at times seemed unbearable.

A typical day in Korea began with reveille just before first light. Shaken or prodded to life by one of their platoon-mates, soldiers clumsily dressed themselves and made their way to their assigned positions for the morning stand-to. Still dopey with that mind-numbing buzz brought on by a lack of sleep, they stared out into the morning gloom, more asleep than awake, waiting for the order to stand-down. After daybreak, the watch was reduced to 30 percent unless an attack was imminent. Men not assigned to sentry duty were fed a quick breakfast and given the opportunity to visit the latrines. Assuming that sufficient water was available, a quick wash and shave followed. The next couple of hours were spent cleaning weapons.

Korea's climate posed a formidable challenge to weapons maintenance above and beyond the regular cleaning regimen. In the winter, the standard issue lubricating oil had to be wiped clean from the weapon lest it freeze and render it

inoperable. In its place, the Canadians used a specially formulated graphite lubrication that was immune to freezing. As with so many other items, however, graphite was always in short supply. In the summer, rain coupled with high humidity conspired to rust weapons and corrode ammunition. During one engagement, a Canadian platoon fired 11 mortar illumination rounds, all of which failed to ignite due to rotten fuzes.⁴⁸ Preventative maintenance like frequent oiling delayed deterioration, but as Robert Peacock recalled, "humidity won over man's technology."⁴⁹

Weapons cleaning supposedly proceeded according to the manual. After carrying out an individual safety check to ensure that his weapon was unloaded, the soldier removed its bayonet (if fixed), sling, magazine, and bolt, in that order. These were laid out on a poncho in preparation for a systematic cleaning. In reality, weapons cleaning was seldom this orderly. Crucial steps, like performing an individual safety check, might be skipped by tired, overconfident, or careless soldiers. Such was the case in November 1951, when a 1 PPCLI private cleaning a Sten gun failed to clear his weapon and accidentally shot two of his comrades. Both survived their injuries, but the hapless private was himself fatally wounded several days later "when he wandered off the beaten path" and stepped on a booby

⁴⁸Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 56.

⁴⁹Ibid.

trap.⁵⁰

Weapons cleaning was almost invariably followed by intense physical labour. When the fighting was fluid, this could include the additional burden of marching long distances over extremely difficult terrain to reach a distant objective. This difference notwithstanding, the afternoon and evening routine of the combat soldier varied little between the mobile and static phases of the war. Stores had to be brought forward, defensive positions (or foxholes) constructed and maintained, sandbags filled, barbed wire laid, and signal wire strung between positions. If a soldier was going on patrol, weapons needed to be test-fired and equipment made ready.

Sun-down was followed by a quick meal, after which the men prepared for the long night ahead. Some continued with their day's work, while others settled down to a few hours sleep before patrol or sentry duty. At last light, the men were ordered to stand-to for one hour. This was taken far more seriously than the morning stand-to, as it was well-known that the Chinese preferred to attack under the cover of darkness when UN air power was least effective.

The order to stand-down was followed by a final inspection of defensive positions by the platoon NCOs, and, tactical conditions permitting, a hot meal. At the same time, the first shift of sentries assumed their positions in

⁵⁰War Diary, 1 PPCLI, 22 November 1951.

the firing line. While their comrades slept, wrote letters, or socialized, the sentries gazed out into the darkness. Although they were normally replaced at two hour intervals, many found it impossible to stay awake. After a hard day's work, with little rest, eyes quickly became heavy with sleep. Men might doze for several minutes before an involuntary reflex action jolted them back to consciousness. Others might actually fall asleep at their post, endangering not only their own lives but those of their comrades. Not surprisingly, sleepers were dealt with harshly. Private Dan Johnson recalled:

Sergeant Tommy Prince, while making his rounds one night, found a soldier, leaning over the lip of his trench, asleep at his post. He came up behind him, grabbed him around the neck and began choking him. Some off duty soldiers, awakened by the noise, grabbed Prince and with some difficulty managed to pry him off the soldier's back.⁵¹

At the opposite extreme was the "jumpy" novice sentry, whose over-active imagination turned bushes into enemy soldiers, and gusts of wind into enemy voices. Sergeant John Richardson recounted:

I came upon a sentry in a long lonely trench, and he was terrified. I asked him, 'What is the matter?' He replied, almost sobbing in despair, 'Listen to that noise! They must be all around us!' I listened, and heard the weirdest noise; it sounded like a huge bird flapping its wings. We traced the sound and discovered it was loose signal wire flapping on the barbed wire, every time the wind would gust. It was a good thing I came across that sentry when I did; if I hadn't, we would have had a nut case on our hands in

⁵¹Private Dan Johnson, 2 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find The Dragon*, 68.

the morning.⁵²

Although "jumpy" sentries were preferable to sleeping ones, they could also cause problems. Repeated false alarms, much like the boy who cried wolf too many times, met with increased scepticism and reduced vigilance. A "jumpy" sentry was also more likely to pop flares and take pot shots at mysterious shadows, alerting any bona fide enemy in the vicinity of his exact position.

The elements made their own unique contribution to the sentry's ordeal. In winter, frigid temperatures and bitter winds tore through their flimsy clothing. Toes and fingers became numb with cold and inactivity, as the sentries stood motionless, gazing out across the frozen landscape. A standing order in the 25th Brigade forbidding the wearing of parka hoods in forward areas -- they restricted hearing and peripheral vision -- left ears and faces dangerously susceptible to frostbite. Sentries were instructed to rub their ears and contort their faces at regular intervals to prevent the onset of this insidious injury.⁵³

The summer months could be equally uncomfortable. Clouds of mosquitos in search of their evening meal swarmed around the uncovered sentries with an aggravating buzz. The only respite came with the monsoon rains, the ferocity of

⁵²Sergeant John Richardson, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 162.

⁵³War Office, *Handbook of Army Health*, 1950, 59.

which proved too much for even the most pertinacious mosquito. Clad in olive-drab ponchos, sentries watched passively as their positions turned into mud holes. Wet feet swelled in their boots, inviting ring worm and a host of other fungal infections. More ominously, the driving rain reduced visibility and masked the sound of an approaching enemy.

Heavy rain and mist were enough to make even the most grizzled veteran edgy; but the fact remains that sentry duty in the combat zone was a nerve-racking experience at the best of times. Men might literally count the minutes until their shift was complete and they could return to the comparative safety and comfort of their front line abode. For soldiers working the pre-dawn shift, relief, and the realization that they had survived another day, came with the morning stand-to.

COMFORTS

The monotonous front line routine of eating and sleeping, sentry and fatigue duties, was enough to dampen the spirits of even the merriest soldier. According to one man, life at the front was "ninety percent boredom and ten percent pure terror."⁵⁴ To make matters worse, soldiers

⁵⁴Warrant Officer David Cathcart, LDSH, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

enjoyed little in the way of officially supplied comforts or amenities. During the world wars, these were provided by private civilian organizations such as the YMCA, Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army and the Canadian Legion.⁵⁵ In 1949, however, the Defence Council decided that the armed forces would henceforth be responsible for "welfare" in the armed forces.⁵⁶

In Korea, the Canadian Army quickly proved incapable of tending to the needs of its men. According to an Adjutant General report, comforts and amenities of Canadian origin were "conspicuous by [their] absence."⁵⁷ Movies were sometimes shown just behind the line but there were never enough film projectors to go around. Even when projectors were available there was no guarantee they would work, as "they were constantly in need of repair."⁵⁸ Magazines and newspapers were horribly out of date by the time they reached the front, and there was a severe shortage of paperback novels. This was especially the case in the R22eR battalions, where French-language reading material was

⁵⁵"Welfare in the Canadian Army, 13 November 1952," RG 24 acc.83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 1.

⁵⁶Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 139.

⁵⁷"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel D.S.F. Bult-Francis, AG Rep On AHQ Team, On Visit to Korea and Japan, 2 July - 4 August 1951," DHist, file 112.009(D87), 5.

⁵⁸"Welfare - Far East, 25 September 1952," RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 1.

practically non-existent.⁵⁹

A number of civilian auxiliary organizations attempted to compensate for the Department of National Defence's inability to meet the demand for pocket books and other comfort items. By the end of the war the Canadian Legion and the Red Cross were providing "most of the reading and writing material" in the Far East.⁶⁰ But the improvements may have been more apparent than real. Two months after the cessation of hostilities, 3 RCR's Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell was still imploring Ottawa to send more "current and popular magazines."⁶¹

Entertainment of Canadian origin was also in short supply. For the first two years of the war the Department of National Defence steadfastly refused to allow Canadian civilian entertainers to visit the troops in Korea. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, although the fact that there were no restrictions on British or American entertainers visiting Canadian troops suggests cost as the

⁵⁹"Report By Doctor Stanby of the Canadian Red Cross On His Visit to the Far East, 26 April-9 May 1952," RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 3.

⁶⁰"Welfare Amenities, Equipment and Supplies Sent to the Far East During the Past Three Years, 29 July 1953," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903-4904, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, Part 4, 2.

⁶¹"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 10. Emphasis is Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell's.

governing factor.⁶² In practice, the reliance on non-Canadian entertainers translated into very few shows for the soldiers of the 25th Brigade. A veteran of the 1 PPCLI remarked that "we were the forgotten people; nobody ever came to see us on our hilltop positions."⁶³ British and American performers were understandably reluctant to visit the Canadians when there were thousands of their own troops in Korea who also needed entertaining. Accordingly, visits to the 25th Brigade were given a low priority.

The lack of entertainment did not go unnoticed on the other side of the Pacific. In 1951 alone, nine civilian concert groups requested permission to visit the 25th Brigade in Korea. All were denied on the grounds that it was not Army policy "to send concert parties overseas to entertain Canadian troops."⁶⁴ Not to be discouraged, several group members commenced a letter writing campaign to convince the Department of National Defence to reconsider its decision. Their efforts paid off, and in the spring of 1952 the first Canadian concert party, the Cammie Howard Show, was given permission to tour the Far East.

The party left Vancouver on 10 June 1952 for a 16 day,

⁶²"Concert Parties for Troops Overseas, 13 May 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4914, file 3128-33/29, Concerts, Parties, and Entertainment Groups for Troops in the Far East, 1951-1957, Part 1, 1.

⁶³Sergeant John Berwent, 1 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 152.

⁶⁴"Concert Parties for Troops Overseas," 1.

25 show tour of the Commonwealth Division. Rear echelon troops were the primary beneficiaries of the tour, as only a handful of infantrymen could be pulled out of the line to watch a show at any one time. This was not necessarily a bad thing. Critics claimed that Cammie Howard's "music was too slow for troops in the field,"⁶⁵ and that the show "appeared to be lacking rehearsal and continuity."⁶⁶ They did, however, concede that Cammie Howard "compared favourably with others that have played to the [Commonwealth] Division."⁶⁷

Only four more Canadian concert parties toured the Far East before war's end. They performed to a predominantly rear-echelon crowd, and none was in danger of taking Broadway by storm. This was especially true of the Western Five. This act toured the Far East in the fall of 1952, and "was not particularly popular."⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, the troops made no attempt to hide their disapproval. A post-

⁶⁵"Canadian Concert Party - Cammie Howard and Party, 1 July 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4914, file HQ 3128-33/29, Concerts, Parties and Entertainment Groups for Troops in the Far East, 1951-1957, Part 1, 1.

⁶⁶"Entertainment - Cammie Howard Concert Party, 1 July 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4914, file HQ 3128-33/29, Concerts, Parties and Entertainment Groups For Troops in the Far East, 1951-1957, Part 1, 1.

⁶⁷"Canadian Concert Party - Cammie Howard and Party," 1.

⁶⁸"Welfare Canadian Forces - Far East, 1 November 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-85/167, box 4903-4904, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, Part 4, 3.

tour report recorded that "the general attitude of the Western Five was that they made very considerable personal sacrifices to entertain the boys. This naturally did not meet with a great deal of favour from troops in the face of the enemy."⁶⁹

Another organization that met with little sympathy from front line troops was the Army Postal services. Post cards, writing paper, and envelopes were scarce, and there was a perennial shortage of qualified postal clerks.⁷⁰ Few men arrived in Korea knowing their military postal address, thus delaying the arrival of their first letter from home. Mail was supposedly delivered twice a week, although most front line men counted themselves lucky to receive just one. On average, it took ten days for a letter to reach Korea, and a fortnight for a letter mailed from the front line to arrive in Vancouver.⁷¹ According to an Adjutant General report, this "compared unfavourably with the [British Army] postal service which provides four deliveries weekly and requires about 6-7 days to reach Korea from the UK."⁷²

It is difficult to describe the importance of mail at

⁶⁹"Welfare Canadian Forces - Far East, 1 November 1952," 3.

⁷⁰"Postal Inspection Trip - Far East, 2 October 1952," NAC, RG 24, volume 19,074, file 1675-151/25, Postal Services, 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade, 19.

⁷¹"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel Bult-Francis," 23.

⁷²"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel Bult-Francis," 23.

the sharp end in Korea. A letter transcended distance, and reminded soldiers of their alter egos as friends, fathers, or family members. When soldiers read a letter they were temporarily released from the deprivation and hardship of their tenuous front line existence. Mail, or its absence, could literally make or break a man's day, as the letters of a young soldier in the 1 PPCLI to his parents clearly demonstrate:

18 October 1951

I sure hated to leave Calgary but there wasn't much I could do to stay there. It sure is monotonous riding on the train... this is the fourth letter I have wrote today.

23 November 1951:

[The Chinese] started to attack just after six o'clock and went on going till [sic] about two thirty in the morning... it sure helps a fellow out [to receive mail] in a time like this.

20 February 1952

Was sure glad to hear that you received your parcel with the souvenir from Japan as I was starting to worry myself if they had got lost in the mail. But they tell me that all parcels sent from over here go by boat instead of airplane. Haven't been getting mail through to us....

29 July 1952

Something sure has gone wrong with the mail service over here. We were getting our mail at least twice a week now we are even lucky if it comes once every two weeks.⁷³

⁷³"Private Ray Dooley, Support Company, 1 PPCLI, Papers," PPCLI Archives, file 111(4)-1.

CONCLUSION

Hardship and deprivation have always been the lot of infantrymen; Korea was no exception. From the time they entered the firing line, Canadian soldiers endured a lifestyle that can only be described as primitive. Yet, as this chapter has shown, it need not have been as hard as it was. Little things, like good food, proper bivouac equipment, and sufficient writing paper, that often get overlooked in the comfort of a headquarters building can make all the difference to lowly combat soldiers. But in Korea it was neither food nor concert parties that ultimately sustained the morale of Canadian fighting men.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

MORALE AND DISCIPLINE

The austere conditions in Korea, coupled with the Department of National Defence's inability to provide even the most basic comforts to troops in the field, led to the introduction of two policies designed to sustain the morale of Canadian fighting men: annual rotation and Rest and Recreation leave. Neither enjoyed complete success, and as the war dragged on and the ineffectiveness of the official policies became apparent, the officers and men of the 25th Brigade found themselves increasingly reliant on the traditional tonic for military lugubriousness: alcohol.

THE THREE "Rs"

Morale, the mental attitude and bearing of a group of soldiers, is an extremely nebulous concept that resists objective analysis. Indeed, the limited official documentation generally suggests a reasonable level of morale among Canadian soldiers in Korea, but the reasons for this are seldom explored in any detail.¹ Part of problem is that a seemingly endless array of variables come into play

¹See, for example, "Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 10; and, "Welfare Canadian Troops in Korea, 27 October 1951," NAC, RG 24, acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/24, 2.

when dealing with something so complex as human emotions during wartime. Morale is, then, an incredibly subjective concept, approachable from a variety of angles.

One way to approach the complex issue of morale is to examine it from the perspective of defence planners themselves. In Korea, difficult and unfamiliar operational conditions were regarded as the greatest threats to morale.² As has been seen, the Department of National Defence did little to ameliorate the discomfort of life in the field through the official provision of comfort items and basic amenities. Instead, defence planners decided to follow the British and American examples and limit the duration of soldiers' operational tours.³ If life in the field could not be made more tolerable, then at least it would be limited.

When the first Canadian troops arrived in the Far East the Department of National Defence had not yet settled on a firm rotation policy. With the original Special Force term of service set to expire in February 1952, "a morale problem appeared in the making unless a clear rotation policy could

²"Notes On Talk Given By Lieutenant-Colonel Stone On Activities of 2 PPCLI In Korea, 5 June 1951," DHist, file 145.2P7013(D6), 6.

³"Welfare In The Canadian Army, 13 November 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 1.

be announced to the troops."⁴ This was done in July 1951, when Chief of the General Staff announced that the 2 PPCLI, the first Canadian infantry unit to arrive in Korea, would be replaced the 1 PPCLI in the fall. The relief provided the blueprint for the Canadian rotation policy in Korea, summed up in an official dispatch in October 1951:

Rotation will be on a unit and sub unit basis except for certain units for which no counterpart exists in Canada, which will be on a man for man basis. Service in the Far East will be reckoned from the date of despatch from North America. Only personnel who have served 12 months in the Far East will be eligible for return to Canada except that [the commander of the 25th Brigade] may use his discretion on individual cases and in such cases may exercise a leeway of one month plus or minus from the 12 month policy.

Personnel whose period of engagement terminates before they have completed the period of service required for eligibility for rotation will be retained in the theatre....⁵

The rotation policy seems to have been a double-edged sword in so far as morale was concerned. The prospect of having to serve only 12 months in Korea gave men an objective to work towards: assuming they survived their tour of duty they returned home at the prescribed time. The rotation policy therefore eliminated the uncertainty of the First and Second World Wars, where soldiers were committed

⁴Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 138. As it turned out, Special Force infantrymen had their original eighteen month term of service extended by several months.

⁵Cipher Message, Army Ottawa to HG 25 CDN INF BDE, 1 November 1951, "Rotation Policy File of 25CIB-1951-52," DHist, file 410B25.069(D1), 2.

"for the duration." It also helped to keep the number of battle exhaustion cases down.

The rotation policy may have been a boon to morale over the long term, but it did little in the short term. A year can seem like a very long time to soldiers, including volunteers, forced to exist without even the most basic comforts or amenities, and faced with a seemingly endless routine of eating, sleeping, fatigue, and sentry duties. Moreover, the rotation policy may have undermined the will of Canadian soldiers to combat. Paradoxically, the primary strength of the policy -- men arrived at the front line not as complete strangers, but as integral members of a primary group whose bonds had been established during training in Canada -- may have become its greatest weakness as the repatriation date approached. Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin and Major Harry Pope both hinted at the overall lack of aggressiveness in the 25th Brigade.⁶ The approach of the rotation date would have only served to make aggressive action even more unlikely.

If the impact of the rotation policy on the day-to-day morale of Canadian soldiers was marginal at best, such was also the case with the other scheme designed to sustain morale in the 25th Brigade: Rest and Rehabilitation (R&R) leave. All Canadian soldiers qualified for two, seven day

⁶"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin," 4; Pope, "Infantry Patrolling in Korea," 1-2.

periods of R&R in Japan. Although R&R was an intensely enjoyable experience for most soldiers, it is unlikely that the promise of R&R in Japan made a palpable contribution to the maintenance of morale in Korea.

Very few men received their second allotment before they were due for rotation, and most counted themselves lucky to get only one. Ostensibly, this was the result of "limitations in aircraft facilities."⁷ The 2 PPCLI, for example, still had soldiers waiting for their *first* R&R leave in July 1951, only three months before they were due for rotation.⁸ Things were little better in other Canadian units. With a "Brigade quota" of only "80 [men] at one time," an Adjutant-General report noted, "it will be a long time before all men can have this leave."⁹

The reluctance of field commanders to release men for their second R&R must also not be discounted.¹⁰ Canadian infantry units were often under strength, and the loss of even a couple of men to R&R leave could translate into gaps in the firing line. The Commanding Officer of 3 RCR claimed

⁷"Brief Respecting 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade in Korea," 2.

⁸"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel Bult-Francis, 10 August 1951," 5.

⁹"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel Bult-Francis, 10 August 1951," 5.

¹⁰"Talk With Captain Fenny On Welfare in Far East, 21 May 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 2.

that "most people were quite happy to have only one period of leave,"¹¹ but no veterans have corroborated this. Sergeant Don Urquhart summarized the feelings of many enlisted men when he said "It would have been better to give us one [R&R] every six months instead of once a year. This would really have [helped] to keep morale up...."¹²

Also undermining the effectiveness of the R&R scheme was the way soldiers were chosen. They seldom knew when their turn would come, and there was speculation that those with connections in Battalion Headquarters were the first to be selected. According to one Korean veteran, these men "became outcasts within the platoon. They were shunned, and their upbeat behaviour viewed as poor taste."¹³ In short, the questionable selection process may have actually undermined morale.

The imperfect R&R scheme convinced the Canadians (and their Commonwealth allies) to rely increasingly on "local" leave. The idea was that if soldiers could not count on a second visit to Japan, they could at least look forward to a 72 hour respite at the Commonwealth Division rest centre in Seoul. Most of the men who visited the "so-called rest centre" were far from impressed. A decidedly racist

¹¹"Summary of Experiences - 3 RCR," 13.

¹²Sergeant Don. B. Urquhart, 2 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 24 August 1996.

¹³"R&R Leave," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

Adjutant-General's report noted:

it takes three hours driving over ghastly 'roads' to get there. Once there the soldier finds himself in a half-gutted city with only other brassed-off soldiers as companions and no entertainment if one excepts the simian types, alleged to be human and female, that invest the off-limits area. Result - the man returns to his unit dirtier and more brassed-off than when he left....¹⁴

Local leave facilities improved somewhat later in the war, with the opening of another rest centre at In'chon.

Although better equipped than its predecessor, it still "wasn't much of a leave centre,"¹⁵ and it could only accommodate 40 Canadians at any one time.¹⁶

In sum, it is unlikely that either the rotation policy or R&R leave had much influence on the day-to-day morale of Canadian fighting men. While soldiers certainly welcomed rotation and R&R, they remained abstract concepts, divorced from the reality of the front line by time and space. Most field officers recognized this, and looked beyond the official policies for a manna to steel their men's morale. They found it in alcohol.

¹⁴"Report By Lieutenant-Colonel D.S.F. Bult-Francis," 6.

¹⁵Corporal W.R. Newton, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 294.

¹⁶Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 141.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol use by soldiers is as old as military history itself.¹⁷ Only recently have some western armies have begun to question their relationship with alcohol. To understand the role of alcohol in the 25th Brigade it is necessary to briefly outline its use in the broader context of the post-Second World War Canadian Army.

The enlisted men of the 25th Brigade first experienced the Army's insatiable thirst for alcohol shortly after their enlistment. At this early stage of their military service, they were "Cee Bee'd," or confined to base. Thus, their first drinks as soldiers were taken not at the local civilian watering hole, but in the Enlisted Men's Wet Canteen, usually the only recreational outlet for off-duty soldiers. "Back then it was no big thing to get drunk, I mean really drunk when you were off duty," Private Ratchford reminisced. "That is part of what being a soldier was all about."¹⁸

Invariably the oldest, most decrepit building on base, the canteen boasted few amenities. The fictitious Private Jacket Coates recalled that "beer drinking was usually done sitting on a rickety bench... to the tune of breaking

¹⁷See Hansen, *The Western Way of War*.

¹⁸Private Gerrard L. Ratchford, 2nd Black Watch, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

bottles and violent talk. The floor was usually awash with stuff and you could cut the fug with a bayonet."¹⁹

The officers had their own drinking establishment in the form of the Regimental Mess. Festooned with regimental curios and war trophies, and furnished with fine leather sofas and crystal glassware, the mess was a far cry from the Enlisted Men's Wet Canteen. Unlike the men in the ranks, officers were privy to the entire gamut of alcoholic beverages, with scotch and port ranking among the favourites. Its opulent decor and fine single malts notwithstanding, the Regimental Mess performed the same function as the Enlisted Men's Wet Canteen, namely to provide a modicum of entertainment and foment cohesion. As the drinks flowed, however, things could get out of hand. Lieutenant Bob Peacock recalled:

As ordered... I took a pinch of snuff and inhaled. The result was a tremendous sneeze which delighted the commanding officer until he realized I had blown the lining in my nose and there was blood over everything within sneezing distance.²⁰

The exigencies of life in the field precluded the construction and maintenance of elaborate drinking facilities in Korea. The Enlisted Men's Wet Canteen might be a poncho shelter or a bunker, the Regimental Mess a marquis tent or Quonset hut. Atmosphere and material

¹⁹Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, 52.

²⁰Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 5.

trappings were irrelevant. What was important was that the hard-drinking culture nurtured in the canteens and messes of Canadian bases was transplanted to Korea.

Another facet of alcohol use in the Canadian Army to appear in Korea was the official rum ration. Rum, or SRD (Service Rum Demerara) in military vernacular, had traditionally been used as a stimulant in the combat zone. After the Second World War, a handful of general officers and defence bureaucrats began to question the desirability of issuing rum to soldiers.²¹ Citing its negative effects on a cold and over-taxed body, and pointing out that rum was not a stimulant but a depressant, they contended that SRD served no practical physiological purpose. Their assault on SRD met with intense hostility from many ex-field officers, including Brigadier W.L. Coke, Director General of Medical Services, who wrote a three page report in 1950 defending the official rum ration.

Although Coke agreed that SRD served no practical physiological purpose, he emphasized its psychological function. "Frequent observations indicate a degree of morale building... response for large numbers of people with small doses of alcohol," he wrote.²² Coke divided the

²¹See letter from Major-General S.F. Clark, Canadian Joint Staff, London, to Dr. O.M. Solandt, Chairman, Defence Research Board, 6 December 1950, RG 24, acc. 83-84/167, box 5767, file 5503-Rum.

²²"Physiological and Psychological Effects of Single Doses of Ethyl Alcohol (Rum), 21 December 1950," NAC, RG 24

psychological effect of SRD into two broad categories which he called "The 'Gift' Component," and "The 'Alcoholic Beverage' Component." Because SRD was not counted among the "ordinary necessities of life," and was "issued on completion of an arduous task, by order of a higher authority," it was a "gift."²³ At the same time, SRD's high alcohol content imbued it with important symbolic qualities. Coke explained:

It is probable that the morale effect of 'a shot of rum' is greater than would result from a gift of a chocolate bar, hot soup, or cigarette. This is because of the symbolic value of 'a drink' in our society.

- (i) It symbolizes being 'off duty,' of being relieved of responsibility temporarily, it marks the end of a job, e.g. the cocktail or beer at the end of the day's work.
- (ii) Rum, particularly, is a masculine drink and he who can take it straight is 'a he-man.'
- (iii) It symbolizes comradeship and cements group bonds, e.g. toasts, stags, wassail.
- (iv) It awakens associations of past memories of happier times - parties, holidays, festivals.²⁴

Coke did not specify the exact quantity of SRD required to achieve the desired psychological results, but recommended "a dose" of between one and four ounces. Coke won a temporary reprieve for the rum ration; two more decades passed before the Canadian Forces officially retired SRD

acc. 83-84/167, box 5767, file 5503-Rum.

²³"Physiological and Psychological Effects of Single Doses of Ethyl Alcohol (Rum)," 2.

²⁴"Physiological and Psychological Effects of Single Doses of Ethyl Alcohol (Rum)," 2.

from active service.

In Korea, SRD was delivered to front line troops in one gallon, wicker bound stone jars that had changed little since the eighteenth century. As SRD moved with the ammunition supply, it was Company Sergeant Major's responsibility to ensure that the precious liquid reached the appropriate troops. Inevitably, cynics at the sharp end maintained that SRD actually stood for "Sergeants Receive Double." Others claimed it stood for "Seldom Reaches Destination."

Assuming the precious crocks of SRD reached their destination, the men lined up in anxious anticipation to receive one fluid ounce -- Lieutenant Bob Peacock claimed that in the 3 PPCLI the scale of issue was one and a half ounces per man²⁵ -- of the thick, black, navy rum. It had to be consumed in the presence of an officer to prevent hoarding, but as one soldier recalled, "there was always some to be had if you knew the right connections."²⁶ Most soldiers downed their dram in one gulp, savouring its fiery bite as it slid down their gullets into empty stomachs. The 2 PPCLI war diarist laconically recorded:

Despite the miserable state and the prospect of a very cold, wet and hungry night the morale of the men was very high. First rum issue authorized by the Brigadier

²⁵Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 57.

²⁶Warrant Officer David Cathcart, LDSH, interview, 23 August 1996.

tonight.²⁷

As the above entry suggests, the decision to issue SRD originated at the very top of the chain command. Indeed, according to army regulations no commander "below the rank of brigadier" could order a rum ration.²⁸ In otherwords, the only Canadian officer with the authority to issue rum in Korea was none other than the 25th Brigade commander himself -- just to issue each man with one ounce of rum!

With authority to issue SRD vested solely in the commander of the 25th Brigade, field officers, the very men with their fingers on the pulse of Canadian fighting units, were powerless to use officially supplied alcohol as they saw fit. There were exceptions, though, notably in 1 RCR's Easy Company during the Chinese attack on Hill 355 in October 1952. Easy only in name, the *ad hoc* company had been cobbled together a month earlier under less than ideal circumstances.²⁹ Comprised of rear echelon personnel and men siphoned off from other RCR rifle companies, it had been formed to fill the gap in the line that resulted from the decision to disband 1 R22eR's Able Company to provide reinforcements for the other under strength "Van Doo" companies.

²⁷War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 21 February 1951.

²⁸"Issue of Rum, 6 November 1950," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 5767, file 5503-Rum.

²⁹Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 203.

Morale in Easy Company was low to say the least.³⁰ The company's fighting positions were terribly run down, there was a dearth of warm clothing and blankets, and it was severely under strength in NCOs, including a platoon sergeant to act as nursemaid to a green Second-Lieutenant.³¹ As the Chinese stepped up their bombardment, the Commander of the 25th Brigade arrived on the scene, and the rum began to flow: between 10 and 31 October, SRD was issued to Easy Company eight times. Rum does not appear to have been issued to any of the other RCR companies during this period, including Baker Company who endured the full weight of the Chinese onslaught on 23-24 October.³²

The liberal issue of rum in Easy Company was the exception that proved the rule. The pedantic regulations governing its issue, combined with the fact that all requisitions for SRD had to pass through an increasingly unsympathetic defence headquarters in Ottawa, ensured that it was doled out in only the gravest of circumstances, and only then on the authority of the Brigade Commander. Private Louis McLean was "never issued SRD during [his] nine months at the front,"³³ while the "rum rations were not

³⁰Sergeant Paul Tomelin, interview, 12 August 1997.

³¹War Diary, "E" Company, 1 RCR, 10-31 October 1951.

³²War Diary, 1 RCR, 10-15 October 1952.

³³Private Louis McLean, 2 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996.

frequent enough" for Lance-Corporal William Powell's liking.³⁴ What was needed was a supplement to the official rum ration; one with the "gift" and "alcoholic" aspects of SRD, but free from the red tape.

Beer was the solution. An integral part of garrison life in Canada, beer did not possess the stigma -- at least to official eyes -- of SRD. It was also readily available in the Far East, cheap, and, thanks to the Canadian Transport Company and the KSC, relatively portable. More importantly, field commanders could dole it out at their discretion, everyday if they like, without having to ask Brigade Headquarters for permission.

Beer quickly became the pillar buttressing Canadian morale in Korea. The 3 R22eR's Lieutenant-Colonel Poulin considered beer essential to "high morale,"³⁵ while Lieutenant Bob Peacock viewed "the almost-daily delivery" of beer "one of the joys of life."³⁶ Private Bill Martin, a driver in the 54th Transport Company, whose truckloads of beer were "given top priority" at all traffic points leading up to the front,³⁷ reminisced that "if there was one highlight of his duties, it was the looks on the faces of

³⁴Lance-Corporal William Powell, 2 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996.

³⁵"Summary of Experience - 3 R22eR," 11.

³⁶Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 56.

³⁷Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 254.

front line troops when I arrived with the beer run... that was one duty I feel helped make a difference.³⁸ The actual scale of issue varied from battalion to battalion, although two bottles per man per day seems to have been the norm.

It is important to note that this initial issue was "free," in that it was provided to the men out of battalion stocks or by one of the major Canadian breweries who periodically donated several thousand cases to the 25th Brigade. For many soldiers, however, two beers a day simply was not enough, especially during the hot summer months or after a difficult task. Fortunately for them, there was the battalion canteen.³⁹ As Lance-Corporal William Powell recalled, "beer was always available and was cheap to buy once you drank your daily ration... hell, coming off a rough patrol... it was almost expected that you would have more than your share of booze."⁴⁰

Situated just behind the front line, the canteen did a brisk business quenching the thirst of parched soldiers. In the 3 RCR, for example, gross sales averaged \$14,000 per month, leading Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell to comment that "the volume of sales puts the canteen in the category of a

³⁸Private William Martin, 54th Transport Company, interview, 22 August 1996.

³⁹Lance-Corporal William Powell, 2 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996.

⁴⁰Lance-Corporal William Powell, 2 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996.

business."⁴¹ Most canteens stocked a variety of British and American beer, although at only seventeen cents for a quart bottle the cheaper Japanese brands like Asahi and Kirin were most popular.⁴² Sergeant Harry Repay remembered Japanese beer as "really sweet," and claimed "it took some getting used to, but once you did, you realized how good it was for so cheap."⁴³

Whether it be western or Japanese, soldiers were encouraged to choose a brand and stick with it; switching between the two could wreak havoc on the digestive system when a significant volume was consumed. Corporal James Wilson recalled getting "the shits after [drinking] a little too much rice beer,"⁴⁴ while according to Lieutenant Bob Peacock, "there weren't enough people able to leave the latrines for patrols," following an issue of Canadian beer. He wrote:

As I remember, no one turned down the beer - we just shortened our patrols and the time spent on various duties until the body adapted to the change in beer. Of course, when the Canadian beer ran out, we were back to [Japanese beer] and the problem, appeared again.⁴⁵

⁴¹"Interview With Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell," 10.

⁴²"Talk With Captain Fenny On Welfare in Far East, 21 May 1952," NAC, RG 24 acc. 83-84/167, box 4903, file 3125-33/29, Welfare - Troops in the Far East, 1950-1957, 2.

⁴³Sergeant Henry Repay, 2 PPCLI, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

⁴⁴Corporal R. James Wilson, Royal Canadian Signals, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁴⁵Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 56-57.

Enlisted men were not the only ones drinking large quantities of alcohol. Some of their officers and were also drinking heavily. Lance-Corporal Clyde Bougie of the 1 RCR recalled that the battalion's surgeon and his sergeant assistant "were always in a jovial mood." He explained why:

The medical officer and sergeant appeared to me to be half smashed most of the time, and on several occasions I noticed the sergeant pull half a gallon of liquid from under his cot and pour some into two cups, mixing it with fruit juice.... When they were both out one afternoon I slipped into the RAP and had a good look at this bottle to find it was 65 proof alcohol....⁴⁶

And according to the 1 PPCLI War Diary:

The supply of liquor in Korea is a delight to alcoholics. It is plentiful and cheap... An ounce of Canadian Club or Haig sells for ten cents in the [mess] and that gives the mess a respectable profit... there was a tendency toward excessive drinking by both officers and sergeants... probably a result of boredom and the new found plenty.....⁴⁷

Boredom and an excess of alcohol contributed to at least two officers' unauthorized forays, or "Whiskey Patrols,"⁴⁸ into no-man's land. One of the most notorious of these occurred on Christmas Day 1952. Shortly after noon, a sentry from the PPCLI reported that a lone Canadian soldier was observed stumbling across no-man's land towards Chinese lines. With a pistol in one hand and a bottle of

⁴⁶Lance-Corporal Clyde Bougie, 1 RCR, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁴⁷"Operation of Officers' Mess in Korea," War Diary, 1 PPCLI, May 1952, Appendix 46, 2.

⁴⁸Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 209.

whiskey in the other (witnesses claim it was Crown Royal), the drunken soldier, an officer from the R22eR, exhorted the enemy "to come out and fight and not hide in their dugouts."⁴⁹ As the inebriated officer neared the Chinese line, Canadian machine gun teams were ordered to stand-by with covering fire. A sniper was also instructed to fire on the officer if captured. Only steps away from certain death, he was intercepted by a patrol from his own battalion, and dragged back to Canadian lines to face "the wrath of his superiors."⁵⁰

A similar incident occurred in the 3 PPCLI. Second Lieutenant Pare Vik recalled:

My company commander, who was known to have a drink or two, came into my bunker one night and said... 'I'm going on patrol; get me your best rocket launcher man!'

'Well,' I said, 'it would be best if you went back to your bunker.' He was determined to go on patrol, so I told him I was the best rocket launcher man. We carried the launcher and one rocket and he stumbled down the hill.... There was a bit of an argument as to which hills were the enemy; he... fired the rocket... [and it] landed with a satisfactory bang on the Chinese hill.⁵¹

Such behaviour might be construed as evidence of rock-bottom morale and a complete breakdown of discipline. Yet, there is reason to doubt this. In his remarkable study of the hard-drinking French Foreign Legion, Douglas Porch

⁴⁹Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 82.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Second-Lieutenant Pare Vik, 3 PPCLI, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 209.

suggested that drunkenness and disorderly conduct "might be a sign of high morale, a way of keeping one's aggressive instincts sharp when there is no fighting to do."⁵²

Certainly, neither of the officers involved in these episodes lacked aggression, as evidenced by their willingness to close with the enemy. Rather, excessive drinking appears to have loosened their inhibitions and stimulated their "Dutch" courage.

All this is not to say that alcohol use could not cause problems because it could, especially in rear or reserve positions. Infantry battalions were periodically rotated out of the front line into reserve positions to re-organize, re-equip, and absorb replacements. Time in reserve was also supposed to give the men a break from the monotony and morale-sapping routine of life in the front line, although this was seldom the case. They usually spent most of their time training, laying wire, digging bunkers, and filling sand bags along the secondary defensive lines south of the *Jamestown* line. The reserve positions also contained little in the way of comforts or amenities. With the exception of warmed tents, proper shower facilities, marginally better food, and the absence of enemy fire (although armed guerrilla bands were a constant threat), there was little difference between conditions at the front and in reserve.

⁵²Douglas Porch, *The French Foreign Legion* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), 135.

Not surprisingly, the consumption of alcohol was the feature of life in behind the front line. Combat-weary soldiers often bragged about how drunk they were going to get when their battalion went into reserve.⁵³ Here, they could attain a level of intoxication even greater than what was possible in the front line. Not only was there even more alcohol available, but the troops did not have to worry about going on patrol or repelling an enemy attack. Moreover, officers were likely to turn a blind eye to drunken excess behind the lines, as the men "blew off steam."⁵⁴ Thus, soldiers could throw all caution to the wind and temporarily lose themselves in a blur of drunken bliss.

It has been shown that such excess might have been a factor in the maltreatment and murder of several Korean civilians by a handful of deranged Canadian and British infantrymen during the first year of the war (see below).⁵⁵ What is less well-known is that a poisonous moonshine known as "Lucky Seven" purchased from Korean vendors was

⁵³"Temporary Receipt of Artifacts," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file.

⁵⁴Lieutenant-Colonel J.R. Stone, interview, 8 November 1994.

⁵⁵Chris Madsen, "The Canadian Army and the Maltreatment of Civilians: The Korean Example," unpublished paper presented at the Qualicum History Conference, 5 February 1994. The author wishes to thank Dr. Madsen for sharing his courts martial records.

responsible for the deaths of several Canadian soldiers.⁵⁶

Robert Peacock recalled having to "claim the body of a soldier from the RCR who had died after drinking half a bottle" of the deadly liquid disguised as Canadian Club.⁵⁷

In a similar incident that claimed the life of another young Canadian soldier, medical authorities conducted a laboratory analysis of the poisonous mixture. It "was found to contain Methyalted spirits (poisonous wood-alcohol), formaldehyde (embalming fluid) and human urine (Korean)."⁵⁸

As these examples suggest, the most likely victims of the misuse of alcohol were Canadian soldiers themselves. As usual, the officers set the example for their men to follow. During their evenings in reserve, most officers could be found in the Marquis tent designated as the temporary Regimental Mess, their feet up and a glass close to hand. A popular drink was "Black Velvet," a combination of stout and champagne lauded for its smooth texture and hefty kick. Mass drinking binges and all night parties were common, once again testifying to the successful transplantation of Canadian mess culture in Korea. On New Years 1952, for example, a joint party of British and Canadian officers assembled in the neighbouring Black Watch Officer's Mess to

⁵⁶It was also known as "Tiger's Piss."

⁵⁷Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 57.

⁵⁸"Part One Orders," War Diary, 2 RCR, NAC, RG 24, Volume 18,342, 4 July 1951.

ring in the new year. According to Lieutenant Bob Peacock, "what happened after that is a matter of conjecture. I awoke the next morning in the shreds of a partially burned tent, very cold and frost-bitten suffering the morning after to beat all mornings after."⁵⁹

The enlisted men mixed their own drinks, often with fatal consequences. On 17 March 1951, for example, the soldiers of the 2 PPCLI celebrated the birthday of their Honourary Colonel-In-Chief. In recognition of the important day in regimental history, all ranks were given half a day off. In the evening a large bonfire was lit, and a concert was given by a Commonwealth pipe band. At this time the men received a substantial beer ration: three bottles from the battalion scale and two from the Colonel-In-Chief.⁶⁰ For some, the beer ration was not enough to quench their insatiable thirst for alcohol, especially "hard" alcohol. A soldier recalled:

[some men from Able company] were making alcohol from canned heat and mixing it with fruit juice someone stole from the mess. I didn't try any but a friend of mine did... it made him sick and didn't remain in his stomach for even a minute. It is the only reason he is alive today.⁶¹

Some soldiers were not so lucky. The next day two men

⁵⁹Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 87.

⁶⁰War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 18 March 1951.

⁶¹"Kap'yong Remebered," 14. Canned heat, officially known as methyl alcohol, was used to heat tinned combat rations.

died from alcohol poisoning. Four others were rushed to a nearby MASH unit to have their stomachs pumped after consuming the lethal concoction, but two were permanently blinded.⁶²

The morning after the poisonings Lieutenant-Colonel Stone paraded the entire battalion in front of the bodies of the dead men.⁶³ He admonished the wide-eyed Patricias for their foolish behaviour, and announced that the battalion would no longer be using canned heat. Nevertheless, beer continued to be supplied to the battalion in liberal quantities.⁶⁴

The misuse of alcohol manifested itself in other ways. The case of a 2 RCR Mortar Fire Controller (MFC), while admittedly extreme, is revealing, and clearly points to the potentially dangerous consequences of excessive drinking. The soldier in question was an old salt from the Second World War, who joined the Special Force "to provide [financial] security for his wife and two children."⁶⁵ After enlistment, he was posted to the 2 RCR mortar platoon. During routine training while his battalion was reserve, he was tested on his ability to lay down mortar fire on a set

⁶²War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 18 March 1951.

⁶³War Diary, 2 PPCLI, 18 March 1951.

⁶⁴See, for example, "Reports By Lt.-Col Stone On Activities of 2 PPCLI in Korea," DHist, file 145.2P7013(D6).

⁶⁵File 264, Personnel Records Survey, June 1997.

of pre-arranged grid coordinates. However, he was unable to accomplish the requisite mathematical calculations. It quickly became apparent to his examiners that he was stone-cold drunk. Immediately relieved of his duties as MFC, he was ordered to appear before a committee of officers the following day, which he did -- drunk! Struggling to overcome the alcohol induced vertigo that threatened to topple him over, he stood before the committee and admitted to the frequent misuse of alcohol. Concluding that he was a chronic alcoholic, the committee ordered the man's immediate repatriation to Canada on "medical" grounds.

Less severe cases of alcohol abuse seldom resulted in anything more than a fine. William Powell recalled that "if there was a major problem in the ranks with too much beer while on duty, a fine would be issued and that would be that."⁶⁶ Alternatively, the offender might be dealt with "on the spot." Corporal Don Hibbs recounted:

I... was in a really shitty mood and took it out on my buddy... the Sarge [sic] stepped in and I just wholoped him... right there and then he could have brought me up on charges... instead he got up and just laid me out good... I was out cold. Next day, I saw the Sergeant and he told me that if it ever happened again, he'd let the Chinese have me and be done with it. Well, it never happened again, that's for sure! Would a young Lieutenant or Captain let me get away with that? No fuckin [sic] way... but Sarge was an oldtimer and looked out for us... that shit wouldn't

⁶⁶Lance-Corporal William Powell, 2 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996.

fly in today's army.⁶⁷

So long as alcohol achieved the broader objective of maintaining morale, field commanders appear to have accepted a certain amount of misuse. Far from being viewed as an anti-social or potentially disruptive activity, communal drinking was seen to foment cohesion, and was thus actively encouraged. However, individuals who habitually misused alcohol or who were drunk while they committed a more serious offence could expect little leniency from their Commanding Officers.

DISCIPLINE

With the exception of a crime survey prepared by the Canadian Army Research Team (CAORT) in late 1951, the disciplinary records of the 25th Brigade largely remain classified. Nevertheless, this report provides a window into the nature of crime in the 25th Brigade in general, and alcohol-related offenses in particular.

Between May and November 1951, only seven Canadian infantrymen (two from the PPCLI, and five from the RCR) served sentences in the field punishment camp (see below) for drunkenness.⁶⁸ This figure was in sharp contrast to the

⁶⁷Corporal Don Hibbs, 2 PPCLI, interview, 22 August 1996.

⁶⁸1 Canadian Army Operational Research Team (hereafter CAORT), "Preliminary Report On Crime Casualties in 25

17 soldiers from support units. Recalling that the PPCLI, RCR, and R22eR comprised over half of the 25th Brigade's total strength, the infantry was significantly under represented in the official statistics. This suggests one of two things. As we have seen, the casual attitude toward drunkenness may have translated into few soldiers being formally charged with drunkenness. Conversely, it may very well have been that support personnel were more likely to abuse alcohol than the infantry. This seems even more plausible in view of the tendency towards excessive drinking in reserve positions. Either way, the small number of infantrymen who were formally charged with drunkenness clearly suggests that the minor misuse of alcohol was not, at least from the perspective of field commanders, in and of itself synonymous with indiscipline.

This interpretation is even more convincing when other offenses are considered. Between May and November 1951, for example, 117 infantrymen served sentences in the field punishment camp for offenses other than drunkenness (45 from the PPCLI, 46 from the RCR, and 26 from the R22eR).⁶⁹ These included such "traditional service offenses"⁷⁰ as absence without leave from duty, forces or

Canadian Infantry Brigade, 14 February 1952," DHist, file 410B25.059(D1), 5.

⁶⁹CAORT, "Crime Casualties," 5.

⁷⁰Madsen, "The Canadian Army and the Maltreatment of Civilians."

strikes a sentinel, acts to the prejudice of good order and military discipline, and disobeys a lawful command, which Canadian infantry commanders seem to have taken very seriously. It is worth noting that drunkenness was not accepted as a defence in these cases. In fact, the average length of sentence in which drunkenness was a secondary charge (approximately 13 percent of all cases) was 43 days, suggesting that it was "regarded more as an aggravation of the offence than as a mitigating circumstance."⁷¹ The only other crime that warranted such a long sentence was "makes away with equipment."⁷²

Meanwhile, the supporting arms sent a total of 103 men to the field punishment camp.⁷³ Thus, of the 220 soldiers detained between May and November 1951 for offenses other than drunkenness, 53 percent were from the infantry and 47 percent from the supporting arms. Drunkenness notwithstanding, there appears to have been very little difference between "the teeth" and "the tail" in so far as general military discipline was concerned.

An analysis of the overall crime rate for each Canadian unit in Korea at this time further suggests that the infantry's disciplinary record was by no means the worst in the Brigade. The monthly crime rate per 1,000 men in the

⁷¹CAORT, "Crime Casualties," 4.

⁷²CAORT, "Crime Casualties," 4.

⁷³CAORT, "Crime Casualties," 5.

infantry was six, compared to eight for the rest of the Brigade; indeed, figures recorded in the PPCLI (seven), the RCR (eight), and R22eR (four) compared very favourably to those in the 54 Transport Company (12), the RCOC (14), and the No.25 Canadian Field Dressing Station (16).⁷⁴

Whether they were from the infantry or the supporting arms, few relished a stay in the field punishment camp: a lengthy sentence was very hard time indeed. This was especially true of the temporary camp operated by the 2 PPCLI during training at Miryang. This brutal institution, usually referred to as "Stone's Stockade" or "the piss can," consisted of a small tent enclosed with a thick belt of barbed-wire.⁷⁵ Inmates had their heads shaved and a large yellow circle painted on the backs of their uniforms.

The day in the life of detainees began at 0430 with reveille. They had ten minutes to run down to the Miryang River to collect water in a one gallon can, run back to the prisoners' tent, wash, shave, and put on their battle order, including packs filled with 60 pounds of river sand. At 0440, they formed up and were ordered to double march, with rifles at the slope, around a fifty foot stone perimeter known as "the bull ring." This went on for the rest of the day, with only short breaks for meals. In the evening, the

⁷⁴CAORT, "Crime Casualties," 4.

⁷⁵"A Day in the Life of A Detainee," PPCLI Archives, uncatalogued file, 2.

exhausted prisoners returned to their tent to clean their weapons and prepare their kit for another day in "the bull ring."

Unsatisfactory performance could land an inmate in "the hole," a tomb-like cavern carved out of the side of a cliff for solitary confinement.⁷⁶ The front was blocked by sandbags and a wooden door with a small opening to allow a mess tin to be passed through. "The hole" was lined with odd-shaped rocks to make sleeping difficult, and large spiders inhabited its dark recesses. A blanket and a one gallon can to defecate in were the only "comfort" items allowed.⁷⁷

Conditions were little better in the No. 25 Canadian Field Punishment Camp (later renamed the No.25 Field Detention Barracks). Opened in May 1951 north of Seoul, the camp's motto was "Discipline By Example." Sergeant-Major Jim Holland of the Canadian Provost Corps recalled:

The routine in 25 FDB was tough, not only on the inmates but on the staff as well. The excess shouting and the constant doubling had its effect on everyone. The daily routine was as follows: All inmates had to be up at dawn and all vigorous routine completed before the heat of the day. The physical training was done in the hills near 25 FDB, as all inmates had to be in top physical condition when they returned to their units.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Steadman, "A Day in the Life of A Detainee," 2.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Regimental Sergeant-Major Jim Holland, Canadian Provost Corps, quoted in Gardham, *Korea Volunteer*, 141.

The exacting physical regime and regular beatings⁷⁹ inmates were forced to endure led Lieutenant Bob Peacock to conjecture "that some of our very best NCOs got religion serving a term [at the field punishment camp] before they became corporals."⁸⁰ Some UN allies thought conditions at the camp were unduly harsh, especially an Indian Army Doctor who claimed that "the regime was too severe."⁸¹ He was especially troubled by the practice of placing "those not amenable to [physical] discipline... in solitary confinement for three days on bread and water."⁸² A.R. Menzies of the Department of External Affairs defended these draconian methods, stating that "there evidently have been no cases of hospitalization on account of physical exhaustion from the Camp and there have been few repeaters."⁸³

Time in the field punishment camp was the most serious punishment an infantry battalion commander could dole out. More serious offenses were brought before Canadian courts martials. As to be expected, of the 64 courts martials

⁷⁹Lance-Corporal Gordon Duholke, Canadian Provost Corps, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 255.

⁸⁰Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 119.

⁸¹"Report By Mr. A.R. Menzies of the Department of External Affairs On Impressions of His Visit to the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade in Korea, 12-17 October 1951," DHist, file 681.001(D1), 4.

⁸²"Report By Mr. A.R. Menzies," 4.

⁸³"Report By Mr. A.R. Menzies," 4.

during the Korean war, most (46) were for the so-called "traditional service offenses." Less than half of these involved Canadian infantrymen, (five in the PPCLI, seven in the R22eR, and nine in the RCR, including three for drunkenness), suggesting once again that the infantry was by no means the worst behaved element in the 25th Brigade.⁸⁴

The rest of the Canadian courts martials in Korea were for violent criminal offenses, such as murder, rape, manslaughter, robbery with violence, and attempted murder. These have been covered elsewhere, and need not be re-examined here.⁸⁵ Suffice it to say that very few men who were actually found guilty of these crimes served their full sentences after being returned to Canada. Indeed, "most soldiers found guilty of the murder or rape of Korean civilians were released within a year or two, regardless of the original sentences passed by military judges."⁸⁶ This travesty of justice was yet another example of the institutional racism that seems to have permeated the upper echelons of the Department of National Defence. Yet, the failure of Canadian military justice at the highest levels can hardly be blamed on Canadian field commanders. The evidence clearly indicates that they immediately took the

⁸⁴Madsen, "The Canadian Army and the Maltreatment of Civilians," Table 2.

⁸⁵See Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

appropriate disciplinary action in cases involving serious criminal offenses, whether perpetrated against civilians or fellow soldiers.⁸⁷

It is necessary to point out that serious criminal activity was by no means widespread in Korea, nor confined to any one army. All of the national contingents to serve in Korea contained that small, percentage of sick men responsible for the vast majority of serious crimes; the 25th Brigade was no exception. However, the sensational nature⁸⁸ of these admittedly "isolated occurrences"⁸⁹ has created the false impression that the ranks of the Canadian infantry, and especially the 2 PPCLI, were overflowing with murderers and rapists. This clearly was not the case. An Adjutant-General's report released in 1952 recorded that "the number of crimes of a serious criminal nature, while regrettable in any event... are not felt disproportionate to the number of troops who have been in the Far East."⁹⁰

Of the 18 courts martials for violent criminal offenses in the 25th Brigade, nine were in the infantry (six in the

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Sergeant Dick Pucci, Court Reporter, Royal Canadian Army Service Corps, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 262-263.

⁸⁹Madsen, "The Canadian Army and the Maltreatment of Civilians."

⁹⁰"Memorandum from the Adjutant-General to the CGS, 22 August 1952," DHist, file 122.009(D95), 2.

PPCLI,⁹¹ one in the R22eR, and 2 in the RCR).⁹² Recalling once again that these units accounted for over half of the 25th Brigade's strength, the infantry cannot be said to have had a monopoly on violent crime in Korea. It is, however, worth noting that most of the violent criminal offenses involving civilians occurred when the Special Force was in Korea.⁹³ Shoddy recruitment may have been partially to blame, but as has been shown in Chapter Six this period coincided with the mobile phase of the war, when Canadian soldiers had far more opportunities for contact with Korean civilians than was the case following the consolidation of the *Jamestown* line. Any attempt to account for the disproportionate number of cases involving Special Force personnel would therefore have to consider factors such as inadequate indoctrination and training, the absence of clearly demarcated "no civilian lines," and the complete lack of comforts and amenities, as well as changes in Canadian military law.⁹⁴

During the last year of the war the tables even appear to have been turned somewhat. The Canadians' comparatively well-stocked reserve positions south of the *Jamestown* line

⁹¹Three of these occurred during on 17 March 1951.

⁹²Madsen. "The Canadian Army and the Maltreatment of Civilians," Table 2.

⁹³*Ibid.*

⁹⁴The National Defence Act replaced the King's Regulations in July 1951.

presented enticing targets for the scores of poverty-stricken Koreans who lived just beyond the perimeter wire, and "looting and pilfering were rampant."⁹⁵ Several civilian infiltrators were shot by Canadian sentries after being challenged, foreshadowing events in Somalia forty years later. But unlike Somalia, sometimes the infiltrators who initiated the fire fight:

The RCR had [an] incident when a sentry challenged a group of intruders in their bivouac area. The response was automatic fire from the intruders as they made a sweep of the tent lines, stealing whatever they could get their hands on. This group had done a proper wire cutting operation and had operated as a platoon in the assault. We were not dealing with amateurs.⁹⁶

It has been suggested that, like VD, "Canadian troops had the highest [overall] crime rates of the Commonwealth forces" in Korea.⁹⁷ The current restrictions on access to the disciplinary records of the 25th Brigade make it impossible to substantiate this assertion. If this were in fact the case, then there is every reason to believe that like VD, it was more the result of unpreparedness and inadequate indoctrination than any natural predilection for crime amongst 25th Brigade soldiers. An Adjutant-General's report warned:

one must not lose sight of the fact that foreign service is comparatively new for the Canadian Army when the country is not engaged in a world war, whereas in

⁹⁵Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 120.

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Bercuson, *Significant Incident*, 51.

the British and United States forces foreign service has always been accepted as a normal matter in a soldier's career and it may be that absence from home in a foreign country, coupled with the totally different conditions and way of life in the Orient, have resulted in a loosening of many bonds which would not be the case were Canadian troops employed in Occidental countries where conditions are not so dissimilar from those in Canada.⁹⁸

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the discipline of Canadian soldiers, a Canadian officer ruminated, "Sure there were some bad weeds in Korea. Where are there not any bad types? The army didn't go to churches looking for choir boys to sign up did they?"⁹⁹ If the Canadians were not choir boys, they were not criminals either. Though the ranks of the infantry undoubtedly contained both, it is misleading to view the question of discipline from such extreme perspectives. It is a truism that the vast majority fell somewhere in between. Certainly, the disciplinary record of the Canadian infantry was comparable to that of the rest of the 25th Brigade. There is even some evidence that it might have been marginally better. More disturbing, perhaps, was their relationship with alcohol. As has been shown, at times the misuse of alcohol caused problems. This was the price to be

⁹⁸"Memorandum from the Adjutant-General," 2.

⁹⁹Lieutenant George Thwaites, LDSH, interview, 23 August 1996.

paid for alcohol dependency, albeit self-induced, on a massive scale. But it must be remembered that alcohol, and especially beer, was one of the only comforts available to Canadian fighting men. In the absence of officially supplied comforts and amenities, and the failure of the rotation and the R&R policies to ameliorate the discomfort of life in the field, alcohol filled the void. In hindsight, this should not have been surprising. Alcohol had been used to steel soldiers' morale long before the first Canadians arrived in Korea. The increased volume of alcohol available in the Far East was simply incorporated into an ethos that was already hard-drinking and accustomed to the effects of heavy use. For many soldiers, however, the dependency on alcohol did not end with the Korean War.

CONCLUSION

RETURNED SOLDIERS

In the evening of 27 July 1953 the guns along the *Jamestown* line fell silent. It had been a hot, muggy day, with some last-minute desultory shelling in the afternoon. As the sun dipped below the horizon and the hour of the cease fire approached, the tension of the afternoon gave way to excited anticipation. At 2200 hours sharp, a salvo of flares erupted along the front, officially announcing the end of open hostilities. While the flares hissed and fizzled, the first Asahi beer bottles were prised open to mark the occasion. Many, many more were consumed before the night was through. Gazing in disbelief at the brilliant pyrotechnic display, between sips of warm beer, the soldiers of the 25th Brigade came to the realization that they had survived their Far Eastern tours.

The cease fire notwithstanding, this scene played out every time a Canadian infantry battalion rotated home: nervous days as the tour came to an end, excited anticipation on the rotation date itself, and finally, intense elation. Said one soldier, "When I got close to my time being up in Korea, it really felt weird... I thought all the time that something bad was going to happen, because I had been lucky up to that point... the good thing is

nothing bad did happen."¹

For many soldiers, the feeling of euphoria was brief. In the 2 PPCLI, for example, elation gave way to indignation when soldiers discovered they were assigned to the same troop-ship, the notorious *Joe P. Martinez*, for the voyage home. Private Dan Johnson recalled:

When we saw the ship, we stared in disbelief.... A few soldiers refused to board the ship. They were not charged and were flown home by [Trans Continental Airlines]. The Army didn't want it known that they allowed their troops to be so badly abused, and had done nothing about it.²

On an individual level, soldiers left Korea with their mental baggage tightly packed. Some, like Private Bill Nasby, "could not forget the guys we left behind,"³ while others just wanted "to forget Korea, forget the Army, and get the hell on with life."⁴ Others struggled with the guilt of knowing they had killed people, or at having survived when close friends had not. Few soldiers returned home without at least some regrets or painful memories, and most were "not at all sorry to say goodbye to Korea."⁵

¹Private J. Robert Molesworth, RCR, interview, Calgary, Alberta, 23 August 1996.

²Private Dan Johnson, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 340.

³Private Bill Nasby, 1 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁴Anonymous soldier, 3 PPCLI, interview, 24 August 1996.

⁵Sergeant Harry Repay, 2 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996.

Fewer still "would have done it all again without hesitation."⁶

The difficulty many men experienced in coming to terms with their Korean experience was not made any easier by the Canadian public's apparent indifference towards the war. Indeed, according to Private J. Robert Molesworth, "when I hear people today that Korea was not a war, but a 'conflict' or 'peacekeeping,' it really pisses me off. You tell people it was a war and people died. It's that simple."⁷

Although several communities organized official receptions for returned soldiers, they were a far cry from the VE and VJ celebrations of 1945. Sergeant George Thwaites reminisced that "with the exception of my family, I don't think the Canadian public gave one thought to what we were doing over there... it wasn't like 1945 when I came home I can tell you that!"⁸ Similarly, Private Kenneth Blampied recalled that "If there was any disappointment, it was the lack of recognition when I got back to Canada. I mean I wasn't expecting a big parade or anything like they had in 1945, but shit, something would have been nice."⁹

⁶Private Louis Vincent McLean, 2 PPCLI, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁷Private J. Robert Molesworth, RCR, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁸Sergeant George Thwaites, LDSH, interview, 23 August 1996.

⁹Private Kenneth Blampied, 2 RCR, interview, 24 August 1996.

And according to Private James Morrice:

I was just a simple kid who should have stayed in Canada... But I had to shoot and kill over there, and I knew I killed people, and I sometimes have trouble with that. That's the hard part about remembering... knowing that I did that and my country really didn't give a shit.¹⁰

Public indifference was one thing, but many Korean veterans found the condescending attitude of some of their fellow soldiers even harder to bear. In the smoke-filled beer parlours of the Royal Canadian Legion, Second World War veterans sometimes remarked, "Kap'young couldn't have been much of a battle if you only had ten killed; why we had over 900 killed at Dieppe."¹¹ Understandably, many Korean veterans shied away from the Legion, finding solace with their comrades in the Korean Veteran's Association. But perhaps the greatest blow to veterans was the Canadian government's lack of concern. Only recently have plaques bearing the inscription "Korea, 1950-53," been added to municipal cenotaphs across the country, and not until 1992 did the Department of Veterans' Affairs finally authorize the Korea Volunteer Service Medal, for "all those Canadian personnel who participated in the Korean War...."¹²

¹⁰Private James Morrice, 1 RCR, interview, 24 August 1996.

¹¹Sergeant Ken Blair, RCE, quoted in Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 344.

¹²"Korea Volunteer Medal," Department of Veterans' Affairs bulletin circulated at the 1996 KVA Reunion, Calgary, Alberta, August 1996.

The belated recognition of Canada's Korea veterans was the final chapter in a story of governmental neglect and high command imprudence that began over four decades earlier, on that hot August morning following Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's call to arms. As this study has shown, the wartime experiences of Canadian infantrymen in Korea were far more difficult and unpleasant than they need have been. That they were expected to soldier on in spite of these difficulties was a measure of the distance between defence planners in Ottawa and the troops in the firing line.

From the outset, Canadian soldiers were not properly trained for the combat conditions they encountered. Trained with European-style combined arms operations in mind, they were unprepared for the small unit, hit-and-run patrol actions that were such a feature of the fighting in Korea, particularly during the last 18 months of the war. Training in the construction and maintenance of defensive positions also left much to be desired, as evidenced by the condition of Canadian defenses along the *Jamestown* line.

Equipment was also a problem. With the exception of their American-pattern support weapons, the Canadian infantry was not well-equipped, especially in small arms. This was not a major problem when the fighting was fluid, but the shift to static warfare revealed just how poorly equipped they were for modern, close-quarter infantry

engagements. Their Chinese enemies, on the other hand, were well-armed with Soviet-designed sub machine-guns "which in a short clash gave them six times the fire power of riflemen." This meant that they offered one-sixth of the target of adversaries armed with rifles.¹³ Together, improper training and shoddy equipment undermined battlefield performance, and had a pronounced impact on Canadian soldiers' will to combat.

The infantry's problems were not confined to the battlefield. Soldiers arrived in the Far East with only a cursory knowledge of the country and people they were sent to defend. Unprepared for the smell, abject poverty, and the seemingly primitive and brutal nature of the alien society that confronted them, some soldiers immediately questioned the purpose of Canadian involvement in Korea. In the third battalions, inadequate indoctrination was also a factor in the failure of the KATCOM scheme.

For the soldiers themselves, the lack of foresight and planning translated into unnecessary casualties. The infantry lacked a suitable field stretcher for most of the war, making casualty evacuation from forward areas extremely difficult and time consuming. There was also a dearth of body armour, field stoves and fuel. Shortages of the latter two items were especially serious, as soldiers were forced

¹³Stevens, *The Royal Canadian Regiment, Volume Two*, 275.

to rely on improvised contraptions with disastrous results.

Infectious diseases presented another danger. The Canadian Army's unfamiliarity with the epidemiology of the Far East resulted in unacceptably high rates of infectious diseases in the 25th Brigade. Venereal disease, the most common ailment, was not particularly difficult to treat, but far fewer soldiers would have been infected had medical authorities and defence planners followed British practices sooner. The infantry ultimately paid the price for this failure through the patently unfair, not to mention illegal, VD rotation policy.

As if all this were not enough, Canadian combat soldiers also had to endure miserable living conditions without even the most basic creature comforts. Attempts were made to assuage the discomforts of life in the field by limiting soldiers' tours to one year and instituting an R&R program, but neither did much to enhance the day to day morale of Canadian soldiers. Instead, they found themselves increasingly reliant on alcohol.

In an interview with the 25th Brigade Historical Officer shortly before the cease fire, a Canadian commander claimed that "From the viewpoint of the professional soldier with Second World War experience... the lessons of the Korean War are ones which can have but limited

application...."¹⁴ In view of the many problems and difficulties encountered by Canadian combat soldiers in a variety of wartime contexts, the absurdity of this statement is obvious.

Having examined the unhappy experiences of the Canadian infantry in Korea, it is clear that something was drastically wrong at Army Headquarters in Ottawa. How senior commanders and defence planners could allow Canadian soldiers to endure such needless danger and hardship remains a mystery, as we currently know nothing about the structure and internal workings of the Canadian high command during this period.

It may be that Army Headquarters shared the outlook of the Department of External Affairs that the Korean War was a sideshow. More than two decades ago, Dennis Stairs argued persuasively that the thrust of Canadian external policy during the Korean War was to avoid becoming "bogged down in Asia at a time when there was a more vital theatre to defend across the Atlantic."¹⁵ Certainly the European focus of the Canadian infantry's training, equipment, indoctrination, and medical preparations would seem to suggest that the high command was more concerned with fighting a major land war in

¹⁴"Interview Given by Lieutenant-Colonel H.W. Stern, MBE, CD, OC 81 Field Regiment, RCHA, to Captain J.R. Madden at Main Brigade, 1600 hours, 20 May 1953," DHist, file 410B25.013(D52), 4.

¹⁵Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint*, xi.

Europe, than a so-called "police action" in the remote hills of Korea. As the Canadian Official Historian himself conceded, Korea "was but one of several defence preoccupations during the early years of the 1950s."¹⁶

This study has, then, shown the need for an in-depth analysis of the Canadian high command during the Korean War. It has also laid the foundation for subsequent studies of Canadian soldiers on post-Korea UN deployments, and provided the analytical perspective the military needs to understand its own recent history. As recent events have shown, the Canadian Army really did not learn from its Korean experiences. The extent to which this influenced the behaviour and performance of Canadian soldiers on peacekeeping missions in the Middle East, Indo-China, the Congo, and Cyprus has not yet been addressed. Only when defence planners finally take the lessons of the Korean War to heart will future generations of soldiers be spared the unnecessary hardships that were such a feature of the Canadian infantry's Far Eastern Tour.

¹⁶Wood, *Strange Battleground*, ix.

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**Personal Papers and Photographs of E.A. Higham, in the
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I am grateful to the following veterans for their information and assistance. A number of veterans who assisted in the preparation of this work have requested anonymity.

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A.T. Lynch, letter, December 1994.

H. Rollinson, letter, January 1995.

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J.D. Atkinson

D. Bateman

Frank Bayne

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Stanley Carmichael

David Cathcart

George Cook, Kelowna, British Columbia, 24 June 1994.

Choi In Wa, Naech'on, Republic of Korea, 10 October 1997.

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W.H. Ellis

Hubert Gray

Paul Gauci

R.W. Granville

Don Hibbs

W. Hummer

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B.J. Le Francois

Joseph Leichester

Louis Vincent McLean

Bill Martin

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Bill Nasby

William Lee

John Pember

William Powell

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L.F. Trudeau

Don Urquhart

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