

Korean War

In December 1947 Prime Minister Mackenzie [KING](#) chastised his external affairs department for agreeing to membership on the UN Temporary Commission for Korea. Nevertheless, on 27 July 1950, after King's funeral, his former colleagues decided in principle to contribute a Canadian Army unit to assist UN forces in Korea. In the government's view, Canada would fight not for Korea but for the UN and the principle of collective security.

The war (1950-53) had begun 25 June 1950. The next day General Douglas MacArthur informed US President Harry Truman that South Korean defences were collapsing and defeat was imminent. The Americans decided to help the south defend itself against the communist north, but through the UN. The UN General Assembly was dominated by Western countries and, since the Soviets were boycotting the Security Council because of the UN's refusal to seat the new communist Chinese regime in Council, they could not exercise a veto. The Security Council thus condemned the North Koreans and called on UN members "to render every assistance" to the beleaguered south. The Americans quickly offered air and naval assistance. On 28 June 1950 Lester [PEARSON](#), Canada's secretary of state for external affairs, commended them, believing that Canada must respond as well through the UN and under US military leadership.

In 1950, perhaps the worst period for [COLD WAR](#) fears, Canadians accepted and even encouraged American leadership in resistance to communist expansion. There was, however, some fear that the Americans were too impetuous in defending the "free world." Pearson therefore emphasized that Canada's participation was part of a UN, not an American, operation. Initially, Canada contributed 3 destroyers and an air-transport squadron. The Americans, thinking this inadequate, used UN Secretary General Trygve Lie to pressure Canada and other nations to expand their efforts. The Canadian government needed little external pressure; domestic interests exerted the necessary influence. Even the socialist CCF urged the government to commit ground forces. Canada's major difficulty was the weak state of the armed forces, but on August 7 Prime Minister [ST. LAURENT](#) announced rearmament measures and plans for a Canadian Army Special Force (CASF) to carry out Canada's UN obligations.

At first it appeared that Canadian soldiers would never fire a shot. Under MacArthur UN forces drove the North Koreans back to the border at the 38th parallel. Canadians and most others expected MacArthur, having vanquished the aggressor, to halt. To Pearson's shock and disappointment, he did not. Canada nevertheless publicly supported the US decision to carry the war into the north. Now the Canadians sought to restrain the American-dominated military action lest the Chinese communists be drawn into battle. By the end of October Chinese "volunteers" crossed the Yalu River, driving back the UN forces. Pearson's concern was expressed publicly in mid-November when he emphasized that Canada had always sought a "confined and localized" war that did not imperil the security of "Korea's neighbours." MacArthur did not exaggerate when on 28 November 1950 he called it "an entirely new war." Canadians would not escape the battles.

In December 1950 the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry landed in Korea, and in May the CASF followed. The Canadians fought on rough terrain and in an unfamiliar environment. The UN forces established a stable front near the 38th parallel, and until the war ended 27 July 1953, the fighting took place along this line. Canadians distinguished

themselves in a major engagement at [KAP'YONG](#) Apr 1951. There were 21 940 Canadians who served in the army and approximately 3600 naval personnel. Eleven army officers, 298 other ranks and 3 sailors fell in action. Fifty-nine officers and 1143 other ranks were wounded or injured. By all accounts, the Canadians performed admirably.

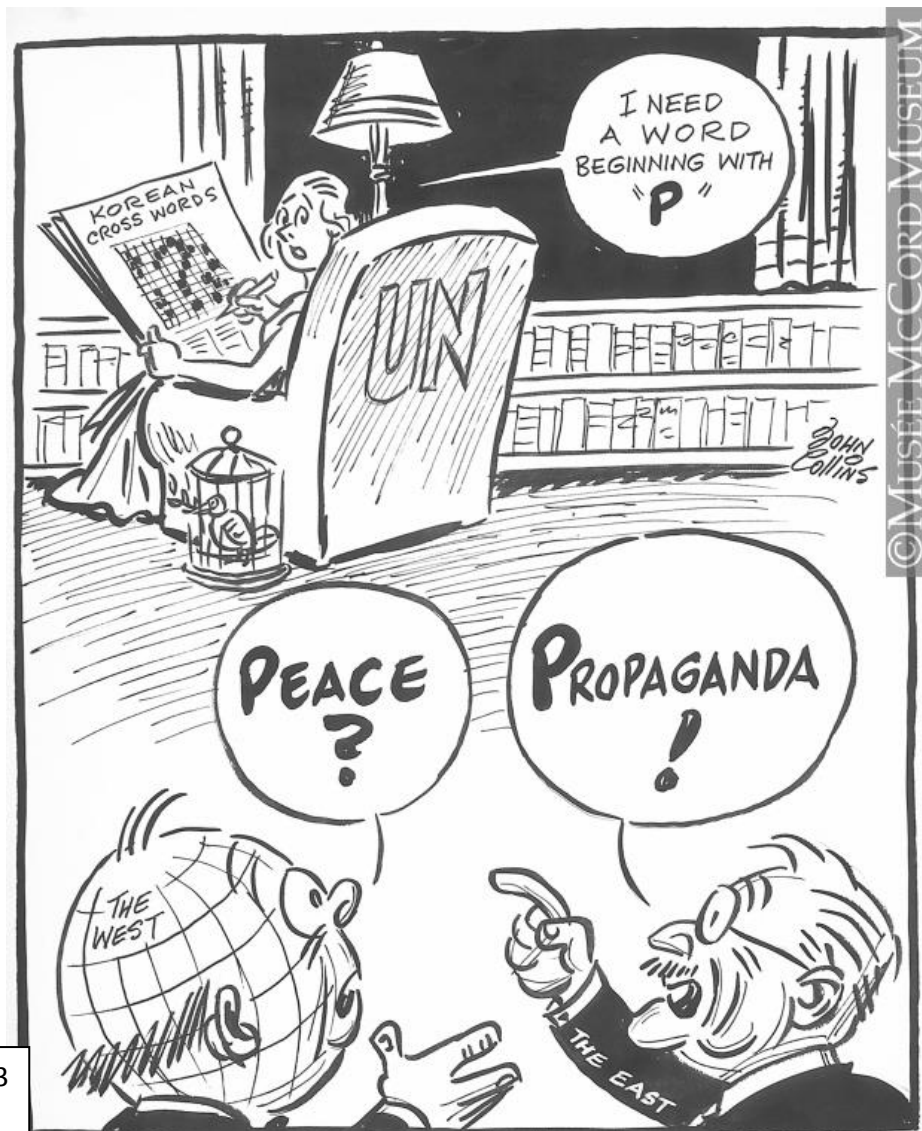
Pearson and his colleagues had thought American leadership essential, but its character became increasingly troubling. First, there were careless remarks by President Truman about General MacArthur's right to decide alone on the use of atomic weapons. Then, MacArthur clearly indicated that he wanted to expand the war into China, an action that might have caused World War III. Even Truman's firing of MacArthur on 10 April 1951 failed to remove many concerns.

During the war, Canadian diplomats sought to "constrain" the American decision makers from the risky actions they sometimes considered. Certainly the Canadians worked with exceptional zeal and skill in UN corridors and in Washington offices to advance arguments for a negotiated peace. Their influence, however, remains open to question. Although some Canadians believe

Canada's actions did restrain American aggressiveness, it must be admitted that American evidence offers little support. The Korean War has thus become part of a larger historical controversy concerning the nature of [CANADIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS](#).

Author JOHN ENGLISH

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Which Will Fit ?. About 1953

Suez Crisis

On 26 July 1956 Egyptian President Nasser seized the predominantly Anglo-French Suez Canal Company, which had operated the canal since 1869. Nasser's takeover of the canal, connecting the Mediterranean and Red seas, was a blow to Western pride and commerce. Diplomacy failed, and Britain, France and Israel secretly agreed to move against Egypt. Israel attacked October 29, advancing in a single day to within 42 km of the canal. As planned with Israel beforehand, Britain and France ordered Israel and Egypt to withdraw from the immediate area of the canal. Nasser refused. On October 31 Britain and France intervened directly, bombing the Canal Zone.

Privately the Canadian government was angry at an action which split the [COMMONWEALTH](#) and alienated the US. Publicly the Canadian role was that of conciliator. L.B. [PEARSON](#), secretary of state for external affairs, and his colleagues at the [UNITED NATIONS](#) won overwhelming General Assembly support November 4 for an international force "to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities." Canadian General E.L.M. [BURNS](#) was immediately named commander of the UN Emergency Force (UNEF). The British and French, however, ignored the UN resolution and landed paratroopers in the Canal Zone late on November 4. Under pressure, largely American, placed on British PM Sir Anthony Eden, a cease-fire was achieved November 6. Pearson fought successfully to have Canadian soldiers included in UNEF; advance units of the force arrived in mid-November. Although Pearson was awarded the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize for his peacemaking efforts at the UN, there were many in Britain and Canada who were dismayed by Ottawa's apparent lack of support for Britain. Such sentiment was probably a factor in the Liberal government's defeat in the general election of 1957.

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Rock n'Roll Hits Britain. 1956,

Cuban Missile Crisis

The Cuban Missile Crisis began 22 October 1962. Following intelligence reports that the USSR was installing ballistic missiles in Cuba capable of hitting US and Canadian targets, President John Kennedy announced an American naval blockade of the island, threatening further action if preparation of the sites continued. Informed of Kennedy's intentions only one-and-a-half hours in advance, the issue for the Canadian government was whether to comply with an American request to move Canadian forces to an alert status known as "Defcon 3." With the approval of Minister of National Defence Douglas Harkness, Canadian units quietly did so, but formal authorization was delayed while Cabinet debated October 23-24. Harkness argued that the nature of the crisis, combined with existing arrangements for defence co-operation, made the alert necessary.

Fearing a Canadian alert would provoke the USSR and believing the American Cuban policy to be generally unbalanced, angered by the lack of advance consultation and concerned about implications for Canadian policy on nuclear weapons, Prime Minister John [DIEFENBAKER](#) and Secretary of State for External Affairs Howard Green were reluctant to acquiesce to Kennedy. About half of Canada's ministers remained undecided, but as Soviet ships approached the quarantine zone later in the week the Harkness position gained support and on October 24 the Diefenbaker government authorized the Defcon 3 alert.

Canada's hesitant response reflected in part the desire of the prime minister and others to preserve the independence of Canadian foreign policy and to maintain a balanced posture in crisis conditions. The delay, however, was widely criticized and contributed to a growing perception of indecisiveness in the Diefenbaker government. It also exacerbated already difficult relations with the Kennedy administration and fuelled further controversy over nuclear weapons. The crisis itself ended October 27-28 when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev agreed to dismantle and remove the USSR missiles in Cuba.

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Vietnam War

The Vietnam War had its roots in the French colonial conquest of Indochina in the mid-19th century and in the nationalist movements that arose to oppose it. At the end of WWII, on 2 September 1945, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam was proclaimed an independent country by Ho Chi Minh; Hanoi was its capital. The French attempt to reconquer Vietnam met with defeat in the valley of Dien Bien Phu on 2 May 1954. The July Geneva Agreements provided for a cease-fire and a provisional military demarcation line at the 17th parallel, pending nationwide elections for reunification in July 1956. Western efforts to divide the country permanently by creating a Vietnamese republic in Saigon, coupled with the refusal to hold the promised elections, led to rebellion in the S, massive US military intervention and the ensuing civil war.

The failure of US policy became apparent in February 1968 when 525 000 American soldiers were unable to stop the insurgents' Tet Offensive; it would take two more assaults, the third lasting six weeks, before US and South Vietnamese forces were able to stop the offensive and retake lost territory. In January 1973 the Paris Peace Accords were signed, upholding the unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam and providing for the orderly withdrawal of US troops, the release of 200 000 civilian detainees and POWs and the organization of free and democratic elections in South Vietnam. The refusal to implement these last conditions provoked an armed insurrection and on 30 April 1975 Saigon fell. The cost of the war was staggering: 1.7 million dead, 3 million wounded and maimed, and 13 million refugees. The US dropped 7 million tons of bombs, 75 million litres of herbicide and lost 10 000 helicopters and warplanes. Some 56 000 US soldiers were killed and another 303 000 were wounded. The direct cost of the war was \$140 billion; indirect costs are estimated at \$900 billion.

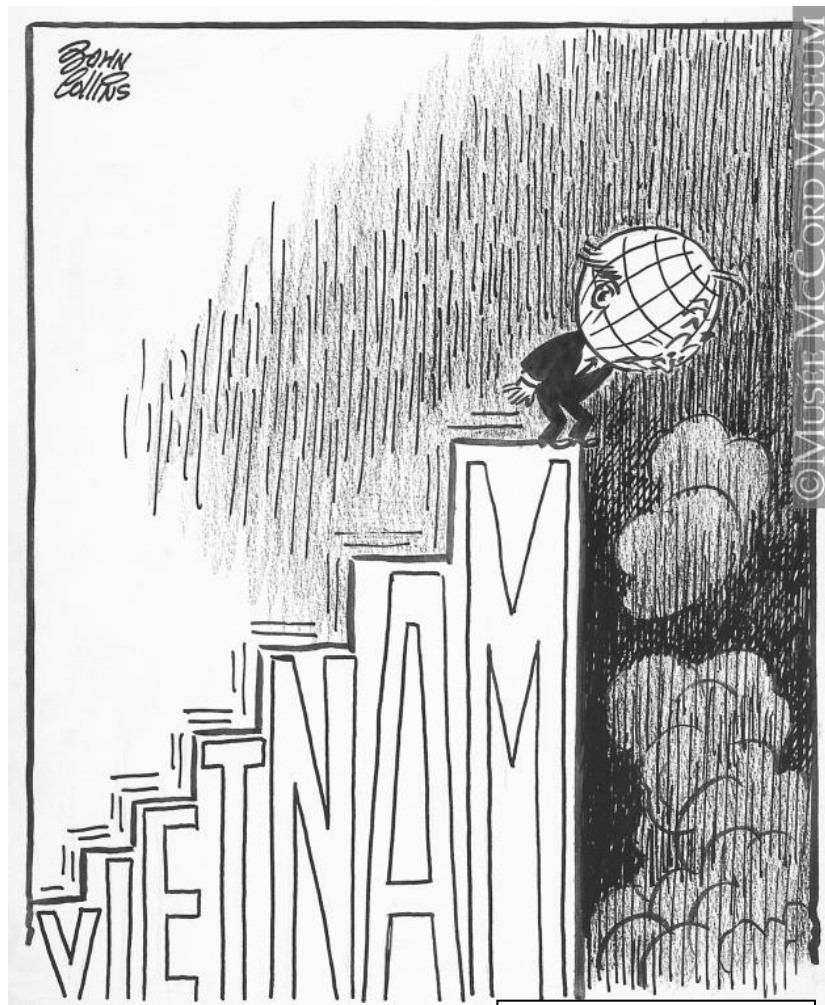
During the years 1954 to 1975 Canada served on 2 international truce commissions and provided medical supplies and technical assistance. Canadian diplomats were involved in negotiations between Washington and Hanoi and successive Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative, maintained that Ottawa was an impartial and objective peacekeeper, an innocent and helpful bystander negotiating for peace and administering aid to victims of the war. However, Cabinet papers, confidential stenographic minutes of the truce commissions as well as top-secret American government cables revealed Canada to be a willing ally of US counterinsurgency efforts.

Canada's record on the truce commissions was a partisan one, rooted in the presumption of Hanoi's guilt and Saigon's innocence and designed to discredit North Vietnam while exonerating South Vietnam from its obligations to uphold the Geneva Agreements. Canadian delegates engaged in espionage for the US Central Intelligence Agency and aided the covert introduction of American arms and personnel into South Vietnam while they spotted for US bombers over North Vietnam. Canadian commissioners shielded the US chemical defoliant program from public inquiry, parlayed American threats of expanded war to Hanoi, and penned the reports legitimating both the rupture of the Geneva Agreements and the US air war over North Vietnam. Ottawa would later assert that these actions were necessary to counterbalance the activities of the Eastern bloc countries with whom they shared membership on the truce commissions.

Canadian aid during the war went only to South Vietnam, \$29 million 1950-75, routed through the [COLOMBO PLAN](#) and the Canadian Red Cross. Although humanitarian in appearance, Canadian assistance was an integral part of the Free World Assistance Program, co-ordinated by the US Department of State with the International Security Office of the Pentagon as the point of contact. In the field, Canadian capital assistance was regulated by the US-RVN Health Defense Agreement and administered by the International Military Assistance Force Office in Saigon. On a number of occasions, Ottawa stopped the shipment of ecumenical medical relief to civilian victims of the war in North Vietnam.

At home, 500 firms sold \$2.5 billion of war materiel (ammunition, napalm, aircraft engines and explosives) to the Pentagon. Another \$10 billion in food, beverages, berets and boots for the troops was exported to the US, as well as nickel, copper, lead, brass and oil for shell casings, wiring, plate armour and military transport. In Canada unemployment fell to record low levels of 3.9%, the gross domestic product rose by 6% yearly, and capital expenditure expanded exponentially in manufacturing and mining as US firms invested more than \$3 billion in Canada to offset shrinking domestic capacity as a result of the war. The herbicide "Agent Orange" was tested for use in Vietnam at CFB Gaagetown, NB. US bomber pilots practised carpet-bombing runs over Suffield, Alta, and North Battleford, Sask, before their tours of duty in Southeast Asia. And the results of the only successful peace initiative to Hanoi - that of Canadian diplomat Chester [RONNING](#) - would be kept from public knowledge in order not to harm official US-Canadian relations. Ten thousand young Canadian men fought in the US armed forces in the war. At the same time 20 000 American draft-dodgers and 12 000 army deserters found refuge in Canada.

Author VICTOR LEVANT



Escalation. About 1968