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# An Enemy No Longer

## The Canadian Military Presence in Japan during the Korean War, 1950-1955

MICHAEL B. PASS

*Abstract: In general, most Canadian historians have not paid much attention to their country's relationship with Japan immediately after the Second World War. Having declined to participate in the American-run occupation of the country from 1945 to 1952, the argument goes, Ottawa was allegedly uninterested in rediscovering Japan. As a result, the consequences of Canada's military deployment to Japan as part of the Korean War are usually ignored or simplified to the rowdy and salacious exploits of soldiers visiting the country on R&R. In this article, I argue that the war not only had a lasting impact on Japanese-Canadian relations by providing the Canadian armed forces with a critical logistical hub and leave centre for its forces in Korea, but also that it helped ordinary Canadian servicemembers transcend some of the more virulent anti-Japanese prejudices cultivated during the Second World War.*

MARCH 1954 was a busy time for Tokyo's Maple Leaf Club. On 7 March, three Canadian destroyers—HMCS *Haida*, *Cayuga* and *Crusader*—docked at Yokohama's Shibaura Pier, allowing their crews to make the brief journey into the Japanese capital. "Club invaded by Cdn navy," the Club's war diary noted laconically. "Sales show quite a climb." The next two days remained hectic as sailors continued to flow in on leave. On day three, however, the centre received a more prestigious guest: "Mrs H. O'Donnell, P.M. St. Laurent[s] daughter visits Club and remains over one hour, accompanied by Lt. Col. McDougal and Lt. A. Gale of the Cdn Mil Mis."—the Canadian Military Mission, Far East (CMMFE) in Tokyo. Far from a mere social call, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN)

had arrived in Japan to greet Canada's Prime Minister. On 12 March, while his daughter met with the men of the ranks, Louis St. Laurent delivered a speech to the local Japan-Canada Society, had audiences with both Emperor Hirohito and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru and then visited Yokohama to take the salute of the RCN squadron's commander, Captain John Charles.<sup>1</sup> In his brief remarks, St. Laurent praised the sailors for having done their part in the Korean War. "The men gave three cheers for the prime minister," the *Ottawa Citizen* later reported, "and he responded by leading them in three cheers for 'Canada, this great nation of ours.'"<sup>2</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, St. Laurent's visit can be seen as an important milestone in Ottawa's postwar relationship with Tokyo. Before his visit, no foreign leader from *any* country had visited Japan since the end of the Pacific War.<sup>3</sup> As part of a world tour that also took the prime minister to Korea to greet the soldiers overseeing the ceasefire brokered in July 1953, his visit is also a notable coda to Canadian operations in the Korean War, one highlighting the conflict's wider impact on Canada's shifting attitudes toward Japan and its people.<sup>4</sup> From the end of the Second World War in September 1945 until April 1952, Japan was under an American-led occupation in which Ottawa had chosen not to participate. Yet, Canada eventually found itself sending troops to East Asia, not to occupy Japan, but as part of the United Nations (UN) response to the Korean War in June 1950. Despite this fact, Canada's military presence in Japan during the 1950s has provoked little interest from scholars. Having declined to join the occupation, the argument runs, Canadians had little interest in the country. As historian A. Hamish Ion argued in 1983, Canada had not been heavily involved in the Pacific War and was thus content to leave the occupation to the

<sup>1</sup> War Diary (WD), Canadian Recreation Centre, Maple Leaf Club, 8-11, 31 March 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, Library and Archives Canada (LAC); and Robert Mayhew to Charles Ritchie, 25 February 1954 and Enclosures, R11214-0-7-E, vol. 184, file I-15-W, LAC.

<sup>2</sup> "Mr. St. Laurent Speaks in Tokyo: Hopes for Trade Expansion," *Ottawa Citizen*, 12 March 1954, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the only major dignitary of any sort to precede St. Laurent was US Vice President Richard Nixon in 1953.

<sup>4</sup> For the broader context of St. Laurent's tour, see Greg Donaghy, "A Voyage of Discovery: St-Laurent's World Tour of 1954," in *The Unexpected Louis St-Laurent: Politics and Policies for a Modern Canada*, ed. Patrice A. Dutil (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2020), 466-82.

United States. In short, “the occupation was not a turning point in Canadian-Japanese relations: Canadians were plainly not interested in rediscovering Japan.”<sup>5</sup>

As I argue in this article, that view rests on an artificial separation of Canada’s diplomacy with Japan from its military involvement in the Korean War. True, no Canadian servicemen were sent to Japan explicitly to occupy the country. Nevertheless, given that there were still plenty of Canadian soldiers *in* Japan during the occupation and its immediate aftermath, both events are not so easily divorced. While becoming involved with Japan in this fashion was never Ottawa’s intent in sending its armed forces to fight in Korea, the need to supply and command its men in the field made it a necessity. From September 1950 until late 1954, when the army began its withdrawal from East Asia, several thousand Canadians were based in Japan.<sup>6</sup> The RCN’s destroyers stayed even longer, remaining until September 1955. While the continued presence of both services after July 1953 lacked the excitement of the war years, it would be wrong to downplay these activities, as the navy’s official history does, by dismissing them as “mainly of a routine nature.”<sup>7</sup> Despite the end of hostilities and the subsequent Canadian drawdown, those servicemembers left in theatre still had to be clothed, fed and entertained. By July 1954, a year after the ceasefire, 5,726 soldiers were still serving in East Asia: 5,053 in Korea and 673 in Japan.<sup>8</sup>

If lacking the drama of frontline combat, it was the “boring” command decisions of CMMFE in Tokyo along with the logistical and organisational arrangements of No. 2 Canadian Administrative Unit (2 CAU) and 25th Canadian Reinforcement Group (25 CRG) at Kure that allowed soldiers to be supplied, rotated out of the line

<sup>5</sup> A. Hamish Ion, “Canada and the Occupation of Japan,” in *The British Commonwealth and the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952*, ed. Ian Nish (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 96.

<sup>6</sup> In total, about 22,000 Canadians served in Korea and Japan during the war, with a peak strength of 8,123 in January 1952. By May 1955, most of these units had been withdrawn. For these statistics and the phased withdrawal of Canadian forces from East Asia, see Herbert Fairlie Wood, *Strange Battleground: The Operations in Korea and Their Effects on the Defence Policy in Canada* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1966), 283-87.

<sup>7</sup> Thor Thorgrimsson and E. C. Russell, *Canadian Naval Operations in Korean Waters, 1950-1955* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1965), 130.

<sup>8</sup> WD, 2 Canadian Administrative Unit (CAU), 7 July 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 35994, LAC.

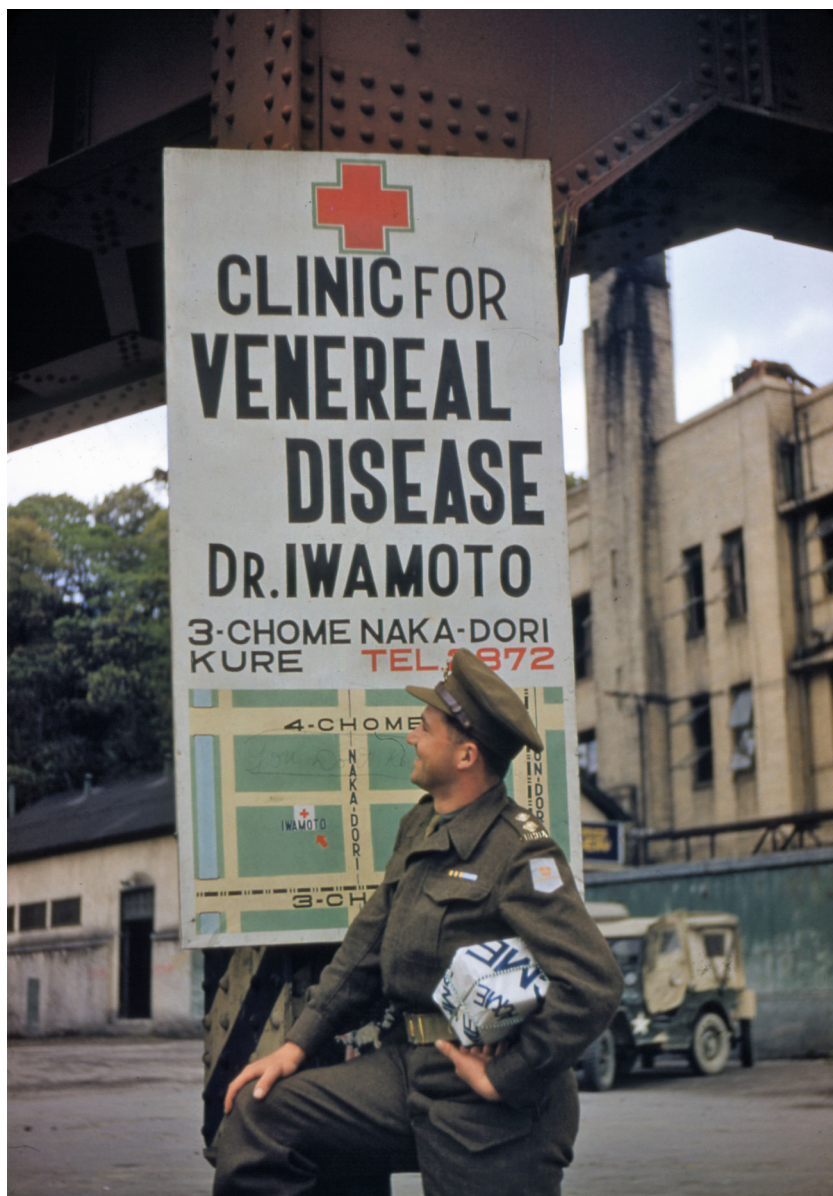
and sent for Rest and Relaxation (R&R) or medical treatment in Japan throughout their deployment. As Brigadier Jean Allard, the Army's Vice Quartermaster-General before taking command of the 25th Infantry Brigade in Korea, later wrote, in Kure "I was able to see one of the last links in the logistical chain of which I had been one of the first, at the other end, as Vice Quarter-Master."<sup>9</sup> While some Korean War veterans have derided their fellow servicemen working in Japan—one claiming that the staff in Kure "had found a comfortable niche and were not prone to letting anything as small and distant as the war in Korea interfere with their cushy lives"—this view likely reflected the typical protest of frontline soldiers in every war about the supposedly coddled men to their rear.<sup>10</sup> Despite such complaints, a military presence in Japan had an important part to play in Canada's Korean War.

The practical result of this was not only that the Canadian military was dragged unwillingly into Japanese affairs, but also that thousands of ordinary Canadians in uniform had the opportunity to meet a people they had been at war with only a few years before. For most, this was their first visit to an Asian country and the experience left a lasting impact. Yet, if Japan is discussed as part of Canada's war, the dominant narrative by both academic and popular historians focuses on the five days of R&R that all troops in Korea were supposed to have every three months in either Kure or Tokyo and the troubles that often resulted. Known crassly as "Rape and Rampage" or "Rack and Ruin," R&R leave was "the highlight of the Canadian soldier's Far Eastern tour," in historian Brent Watson's words, filled with nonstop drinking, partying and prostitution (plus an epidemic of venereal disease [VD]).<sup>11</sup> This is by no means a false view. But it does not do justice to the complexity of Canadian interactions with the Japanese, ignoring both the non-

<sup>9</sup> Jean V. Allard with Serge Bernier, *The Memoirs of General Jean V. Allard* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1988), 172.

<sup>10</sup> Andrew C. Moffat, *Korea Memories: A Canadian Gunner's Experience in the "Forgotten War"* (Ottawa: Keshet, 2006), 23.

<sup>11</sup> See Brent Byron Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea, 1950-1953* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 135-36. See also David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 174; and Robert Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon: The Canadian Army in Korea, 1950-1953* (Edmonton: Four Winds, 1995), 291-94.



“Rack and Ruin.” An amused Canadian lieutenant poses in front of a sign promoting a VD treatment clinic in Kure, April 1953. The language of the sign denotes the expected clientele. [John Thomas Redmond, CWM, 20110039-004, Plate 126]

combat servicemen permanently based in the country as well as the often-varied nature of the R&R experience itself.

In this article, I thus attempt to nuance Canada's relationship with Japan during the 1950s by showing how the war influenced its perceptions of an erstwhile enemy. In doing so, I note how Japan had a role to play in Canada's Korean War as both a logistical hub and a leave centre which brought several thousand Canadians into contact (and sometimes conflict) with Japanese civilians. In the first section, I outline the state of Canadian views of Japan after the Second World War to show what preconceptions servicemembers held as they first deployed to the country in 1950. In the second section, I explore the "high policy" of the Canadian presence in Japan, as conducted by both generals and civilian diplomats, to see how Canada's wartime engagement with Japan operated at the official level. As will be seen, Canada's decision to not get involved in the occupation of Japan required it to later play catch-up compared to its already established American and Commonwealth counterparts. In the third section, I turn to the "real life" experience of the ordinary men and women of the Canadian armed forces in Japan to see what these interactions looked like at the individual level.<sup>12</sup> As I will demonstrate, visiting Japan during the Korean War proved a memorable experience for soldiers and helped break down the negative stereotypes they held about the country from its violent conduct during the Second World War.

### **THE INTERBELLUM ERA: CONTEXTUALIZING CANADIAN VIEWS OF JAPAN IN 1950**

By the end of the Pacific War in 1945, Canadian public opinion toward Japan was universally hostile, marked by a near total lack of sympathy or respect for the country or its people. That May, the Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO) asked Canadians if they thought "it would be possible for Japan to become a good nation within twenty years or so after the war." The results were definite and damning: 31 per cent thought it would take more than two

<sup>12</sup> I borrow both terms from historian David Reynolds's study of Second World War Anglo-American encounters in his *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945* (New York: Random House, 1995), Part III and IV.

decades and 51 per cent thought the Japanese could *never* redeem themselves, a far greater proportion than the third of respondents who believed the Germans were similarly incurable.<sup>13</sup> With the full scope of Japan's war crimes now emerging, few Canadians were in a lenient mood. Events had shown the Japanese to be "pitiless creatures whose capacity for savagery was concealed beneath a thin veneer of politeness," as the *Ottawa Citizen* editorialised that September.<sup>14</sup> For the Canadian prisoners of war captured at Hong Kong in December 1941, the anger was even more palpable. "The Japanese are just animals," the newly-liberated William Moles informed the *Globe and Mail* in October. "They're not human. ... Let there be no talk of a soft peace with Japan."<sup>15</sup> One postwar Canadian account of C Force's captivity by the *Vancouver Sun* expressed undisguised revulsion that "Husky prairie-raised boys were compelled to knuckle to the little brown-skinned grinning monkey men."<sup>16</sup> Not to be outdone in such blatant racism, Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King infamously concluded to his private diary that while the use of the atomic bombs was tragic, if they had to be used against anyone, "It is fortunate that the use of the bomb should have been upon the Japanese rather than upon the white races of Europe."<sup>17</sup> To most Canadians in 1945, Japan was a violent and deceitful country, one populated by racial inferiors who had suffered a richly deserved defeat at the hands of the Allies.

In retrospect, what is perhaps shocking is how quickly Canadians' uncompromising views of Japan faded after the war. To some extent, this was because such extreme hatreds were simply untenable long term, having been engendered by wartime fearmongering and propaganda that was so flimsy—and dependent on a dearth of contradictory views about Japan—that almost anything was an improvement. As historian John Dower notes, Western racism and cynicism towards Japan did not evaporate in 1945; rather, they were

<sup>13</sup> Canadian Institute of Public Opinion (CIPO), "Canadians Think Japanese Even Worse Students of Peace Than Are the Germans," *Ottawa Citizen*, 19 May 1945, 13.

<sup>14</sup> "Japan Unmasked," *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 September 1945, 20.

<sup>15</sup> "Recipes Favorite Topic of Hong Kong Prisoners," *Globe and Mail*, 14 October 1945, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Albert Foote, "Hope Kept the Grenadiers Alive," *Vancouver Sun Magazine*, 24 November 1945, 8.

<sup>17</sup> W. L. M. King Diaries, 6 August 1945, R10383-0-6-E, LAC; and Klaus H. Pringsheim, *Neighbours Across the Pacific: Canadian-Japanese Relations, 1870-1982* (Oakville, ON: Mosaic, 1983), 90-91.



“sublimated, and emerged in less blatant guises.”<sup>18</sup> Still, it is striking how fast “seemingly irreconcilable hatred gave way to cordial relations once the fighting had ceased.”<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, if the old militaristic Japan had been formally disbanded in 1945, that does not mean that Canadians thought it was gone for good. For William Bayles, writing in 1946 for the popular Canadian magazine *Maclean's*, the American “liberation” of Japan had plainly “not freed the people either from their police or the military caste.” Indeed, not only had ordinary Japanese “been able to rationalize defeat, but he has even managed to twist it into a kind of left-handed honor.”<sup>20</sup> As Canadian Colonel Richard Molone informed *Maclean's* readers in October 1945, the “sphinxlike attitude of every Japanese,” made it hard to know their real opinions. The Japanese were, after all, “a race whose thinking processes and ours are several centuries apart.”<sup>21</sup> While such attitudes ebbed in the years that followed, they remained a potent stereotype about Japan, one held by many Canadians deploying to East Asia in 1950.

Another set of baggage carried by soldiers were assumptions about Asian “sensuality.” By 1950, the idea that Japan was an excessively promiscuous place where Western men might indulge their fantasies was well established and had a long history.<sup>22</sup> And, as recent historians like Sarah Kovner have begun to explore, there is a complicated history of sex work in Japan between 1945, when the American occupation forces first arrived, and 1956 when Tokyo formally criminalised prostitution in part as a response to the presence of so many foreign soldiers in Japan. This postwar

<sup>18</sup> For example, as scholar Ian Littlewood has explored, the wartime Western view of the Japanese as an inherently “sadistic” and violent people was adapted and repeatedly alluded to in the decades that followed. See Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), chapters 15-16.

<sup>19</sup> John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 310-11. For a comparison of the war's legacy on American views of Japan during the immediate postwar years, see Sheila K. Johnson, *The Japanese Through American Eyes* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), chapter 2.

<sup>20</sup> William D. Bayles, “Mr. Moto In Defeat,” *Maclean's Magazine*, 15 March 1946, 5-6.

<sup>21</sup> Richard S. Malone, “Japan in Defeat,” *Maclean's Magazine*, 15 October 1945, 7. Cf. Richard S. Malone, *A World in Flames, 1944-1945* (Don Mills, ON: Collins, 1984), 261-66.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan*, chapters 13-14.

prostitution by local “panpan,” as they were usually known, was understandably shameful to many Japanese. Yet, as Kovner notes, “even while embodying unwelcome changes in Japanese society, the panpan were also in a position to represent Japan to the occupiers.”<sup>23</sup> This was certainly true for Canadians who visited the country during the Korean War. One influential expression of this view was Herbert Wood’s 1966 novel *The Private War of Jacket Coates*, which spent two chapters on the protagonist’s R&R antics in Japan. After carousing at a bar, Coates notes that all he needs to complete his R&R is “female companionship.” “After all, the whole idea was to give the soldiery a break from the horrors of war; the horrors of an army-run leave centre were just not the answer.”<sup>24</sup> From being casually offered a barkeep’s underage daughters to patronising a brothel for more mature company, the “Japan” conjured by Wood drips with sex, hypocrisy and racial insensitivity. If fictional, the fact that Wood also authored the Army’s official history of the war and had a brief tour of duty in Korea has lent the novel an air of authority and it is frequently cited by historians in characterising this and other similarly cynical aspects of the conflict.<sup>25</sup>

Such views of Japan echoed well beyond Wood’s novel. One Canadian veteran candidly admitted later that he and most of his fellow soldiers arrived in Kure expecting to find “booze and broads.” Of his own encounter with a panpan, he personally found it awkward and matter of fact: “The seduction wasn’t that erotic, no shouts or groans or compulsive spasms ... I wasn’t emotionally involved, but from a physical point of view it was enjoyable.”<sup>26</sup> More observant veterans recalled their approach to Japanese women in less flattering terms. On the train from Tokyo to Kure, a Quebec Inuit soldier named Eddy Weetaltuk was stunned when another soldier casually

<sup>23</sup> Sarah Kovner, *Occupying Power: Sex Workers and Servicemen in Postwar Japan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 77. See also Shibusawa Naoko, *America’s Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Herbert Fairlie Wood, *The Private War of Jacket Coates* (Don Mills, ON: Longmans, 1966), 129.

<sup>25</sup> For Coates’s use in illuminating the Canadian experience in Korea, see David J. Bercuson, *True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 216; Denis Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint: Canada, the Korean War, and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 184n3, 189; and Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 134, 136, 160.

<sup>26</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 43-44.

propositioned a local woman at the next station, having sex with her in front of the entire car. “I saw a Japanese police officer passing by the couple. He just walked by without a word, as if he had seen nothing.” The event did not sit well with him, as in Canada such an act “would have sent the guy straight to prison. I was very uneasy to realize that we were here to protect and serve but that some of us were doing things because they were in a foreign country and could get away with what they would not even think of doing in their own country.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, as Weetaltuk noted, this was more than Japanese women simply exploiting the situation; local men too found ways to benefit from foreign soldiers. On a ship from Pusan to Japan, “a man wearing a long trench coat” approached with bottles of whisky to sell. When they asked for some ice and Coca-Cola to go with it, he ushered them to his cabin that was “like Ali Baba’s cave: there was everything in there that a soldier on leave could wish for.” As he concluded, the Japanese “knew all about our longings for sinful pleasures and were exploiting our weaknesses with so much elegance. I could not avoid thinking that their very polite faces were certainly hiding a true disregard for our civilization.”<sup>28</sup> As Sarah Kovner notes, while prostitutes were the face of the postwar Allied servicemen-centred economy of Japan, plenty of other Japanese benefitted indirectly from their services: “Taxi drivers and rickshaw pullers transported clients, souvenir salesmen sold trinkets to foreign men, and food and drink companies supplied proprietors.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, as Eddy Weetaltuk’s postwar account honestly acknowledges, few Canadians soldiers likely appreciated this reality at the time.

A final way in which Japan was contextualised by Canadians in 1950 was in the internment and deportation of Japanese-Canadians during and after the Second World War. While there had been advocates for imprisoning the Japanese-Canadians in all parts of Canada during the conflict, British Columbia was the only province where the idea had serious traction and even this was less unanimous than its most vocal adherents often claimed.<sup>30</sup> By contrast, most Canadians outside the province were less dogmatic and their views

<sup>27</sup> Eddy Weetaltuk with Thibault Martin, *From the Tundra to the Trenches* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2016), 86-87.

<sup>28</sup> Weetaltuk and Martin, *From the Tundra to the Trenches*, 105-06.

<sup>29</sup> Kovner, *Occupying Power*, 96.

<sup>30</sup> Ann Gomer Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1981), 34-35.

softened with time. By as early as January 1945, a 41 per cent plurality of respondents told CIPO that any Japanese-Canadian who had “never done anything disloyal” should be allowed to remain in Canada while another 18 per cent thought this should apply only to the Canadian-born. Moreover, when asked if Japanese-Canadians deserved the vote, 42 per cent agreed.<sup>31</sup> As historian Stephanie Bangarth writes, even during the war, there were “select individuals, usually English Canadians and minority group activists,” who agitated on behalf of the internees. “Although there was almost no opposition to the relocation,” she notes, “their disfranchisement and expatriation mobilized dissent.”<sup>32</sup> While public pressure prevented any forced deportations, 3,957 Japanese-Canadians were repatriated “voluntarily” in 1946. After this, however, public opinion shifted to enfranchise the remainder of the community by 1949.<sup>33</sup>

It was thus a surprise for the Canadian Army when it arrived in Japan to discover that there were Japanese-Canadians already there who were keen to put on a uniform. For many repatriates, especially the Canadian-born who had only been children in 1946, Canada was their “home” and joining the army offered a way to eventually return after their tours of duty were complete.<sup>34</sup> “It was difficult for me there,” Private Fujino Atero later recalled. “I had been born and raised in Canada and did not know the Japanese culture.”<sup>35</sup> Others simply had few options in Japan. “I didn’t have any money, don’t have a job, don’t have a place to stay,” Sergeant Arthur Sato laughed years later. “We suggest you join the Canadian Army,” the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo recommended after he had explained his predicament.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, *Public Opinion, 1935-1946* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 379-80.

<sup>32</sup> Stephanie D. Bangarth, *Voices Raised in Protest: Defending Citizens of Japanese Ancestry in North America, 1942-49* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>33</sup> See Audrey Kobayashi, Reuben Rose-Redwood and Sonja Aagesen, “Exile: Mapping the Migration Patterns of Japanese Canadians Exiled to Japan in 1946,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 37, 4 (Summer 2018): 73-89; and Patricia E. Roy, *The Triumph of Citizenship: The Japanese and Chinese in Canada, 1941-1967* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007), chapter 5.

<sup>34</sup> D. J. Timmons, “‘Evangelines of 1946’: The Exile of Nikkei from Canada to Occupied Japan” (MA thesis, University of Victoria, 2011), 84-86.

<sup>35</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 15.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Arthur Hitoshi Sato, 21 May 2008, SC141\_SAH\_595, Canadian Military Oral History Collection, University of Victoria.

In July 1952, the first eight Japanese-Canadians were inducted into the army at Kure. “There is a constant flow of applications for enlistment from other youths similarly situated,” war correspondent Bill Boss reported. While the screening was rigorous—physical maladies, usually tuberculosis, caused many rejections—plenty of applicants made the cut.<sup>37</sup> Fujino was initially employed as a runner in Korea before being sent to 2 CAU for clerical work. He returned to Canada in 1955. As for Sato, he never got further than Kure where he joined 2 CAU in 1953. He returned to Canada in August 1954.<sup>38</sup> These Japanese-Canadians left a good impression on the other soldiers they served with. “They’re above average for the normal recruit and they work hard,” drill Sergeant C. W. Kelly testified approvingly to Bill Boss. “I’d like to see us recruit infantrymen and gunners like these fellows,” Lieutenant-Colonel Ed McNaughton, the CO of the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery’s 1st Regiment added. “They’re good chaps.”<sup>39</sup> The positive reception of these Japanese-Canadian soldiers, fighting for their country after being exiled only a few years before, reveals the weakening of Canadian Japanophobia that had taken place prior to the outbreak of the Korean War and the arrival of the first Canadian soldiers in Japan by 1950.

### **HIGH POLICY: BUILDING THE CANADIAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IN JAPAN**

On 24 September 1950, a Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) transport plane touched down at Tokyo’s Haneda airport. On board were the nine men of CMMFE commanded by Brigadier Frank Fleury. Sent in advance of the newly-recruited Canadian Army Special Force (CASF), Fleury’s orders were to coordinate with Canada’s diplomatic mission in Tokyo and the US Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan to prepare for their arrival, particularly by finding a place where the CASF could train before seeing combat. This would not be easy. The initial plan for the Canadians to train

<sup>37</sup> Bill Boss, “Eight Japanese Canadians Complete Training,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 July 1952, 6.

<sup>38</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 15; WD, 2 CAU, 30 July 1954, 20 August 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 35994, LAC; Interview with Arthur Hitoshi Sato; and WD, 2 CAU, 4 August 1953, R112-0-2-E, vol. 35994, LAC.

<sup>39</sup> Boss, “Eight Japanese Canadians Complete Training,” 6.

at an American base on Okinawa was quickly deemed impractical as the facilities were primitive and the terrain too dissimilar from that in Korea.<sup>40</sup> Even worse, there was simply no room for CMMFE in war-ruined Tokyo. “Attempts were made to find proper office accommodation,” its war diary recorded, but this was “a very difficult job as office space is at a premium.” Eventually, CMMFE officers were billeted at the luxury Marunouchi Hotel, controlled by the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF). It took another fortnight and several false leads before Fleury secured two offices at “Empire House,” BCOF’s Tokyo headquarters, which also provided a Lieutenant Morley—“their office furnishing expert”—to help provision them. While, as Fleury later testified, his relations with his British and American allies were cordial and their help greatly appreciated, this was still not a particularly auspicious start to his mission.<sup>41</sup>

As its involvement in Korea increased, this lack of a pre-existing presence in Japan would hamper both the Canadian Army’s combat efficiency and its military prestige. One telling anecdote is given by CASF commander Brigadier John Rockingham as he traversed Japan with BCOF head William Bridgeford in 1952. Bridgeford, as Rockingham later noted, “lived in Japan in the grand manner, as did his American counterpart.” His presence assured that both men were escorted from their train to a waiting car by the stationmaster “actually over a red carpet.” “See what we missed,” Rockingham joked, “by not being part of the occupation forces!”<sup>42</sup> The remark was facetious, but it noted a basic truth: Canada’s lack of a postwar presence in Japan had repercussions. This reliance on Commonwealth facilities in Japan was criticised by both contemporaries and historians alike. Canadians visiting Tokyo for R&R, war correspondent Bill Boss observed in 1951, found nothing for them. “During the Second World War and after, the Canadian Army showed the world how to operate leave centres that fitted the bill. The knack must be there somewhere still; and the will to do

<sup>40</sup> In the end, CASP training was undertaken at the American military base at Fort Lewis in Washington state before departing for Korea by sea via Seattle. See Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 50-53.

<sup>41</sup> WD, CMMFE, 20 September 1950 to 16 October 1950, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC; and Stairs, *The Diplomacy of Constraint*, 191-92, 211-12.

<sup>42</sup> John M. Rockingham, “Recollections of Korea,” 77, August 1975, R4240-0-1-E, LAC.



A tramcar passes along the streets of a rapidly rebuilding Tokyo, as photographed by a Canadian soldier in the early 1950s. [E.L. Lawson, CWM, 19840076-002, Plate 29]

it again.”<sup>43</sup> The result was that if the Canadians wanted to stay at a leave centre, they had to use other nations’ facilities, like the Australian centre at Ebisu. Not only did this cause tensions—few Canadians, one veteran recalled, wanted to spend leaves “eating mutton and listening to how great the British and Australians thought they were”—but it also created, as reporter Peter Inglis argued, an inferiority complex: “in every case the Canadians involved have a feeling of being beggars.”<sup>44</sup> Not only did this foster poor morale, but the absence of other entertainment encouraged high rates of VD and the R&R escapades noted earlier. While Ottawa would propose its Maple Leaf Club in May 1952 and had opened it by September, historians argue this was too little too late.<sup>45</sup>

Yet, if there were “a series of blunders and oversights that ultimately shaped the Canadian infantry’s Korean experience,” then it is inadequate to frame this, as some historians do, as simply an unacceptable oversight by army planners.<sup>46</sup> That “the Canadian army was not ready to take care of its men’s morale or their overall physical or spiritual well-being behind in front,” was as much because it lacked the Japanese support facilities already enjoyed by its Commonwealth and US allies.<sup>47</sup> But the decision to rely on its allies made practical sense given Canada’s refusal to join in the occupation. With no pre-existing facilities in Japan by June 1950, no prior agreements with the Japanese government and no time to swiftly build any, this was the path of least resistance. By the war’s end, the army was able to remedy most of its early shortcomings, relying less on the largess of its allies while tailoring new services to the specific needs of Canadian servicemembers.

<sup>43</sup> William Boss, “Men Have Poor Time on Tokyo Leave,” *Globe and Mail*, 29 June 1951, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 135; and Peter Inglis, “Submersion of National Identity Cause of Most Complaints by Troops,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 January 1952, 13.

<sup>45</sup> W. R. Wright, “Re: ... Military Recreation Center, Tokyo; Lease of Building,” 21 May 1952, R112-0-2-E, vol. 5196, file HQS15-13-20, LAC; WD, CMMFE, 17 September 1952, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC; and K. Meghan Fitzpatrick, “Prostitutes, Penicillin and Prophylaxis: Fighting Venereal Disease in the Commonwealth Division During the Korean War, 1950-1953,” *Social History of Medicine* 28, 3 (August 2015): 571-74.

<sup>46</sup> Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 174. That the Canadian Army had initially decided that the CASF did not require its own welfare unit only compounded this situation. See “Org. and Admin No. Cdn. Welfare Unit,” October 1950, R112-0-2-E, vol. 35993, file 2001-1918, part 1, LAC.



Canada did at least have one outpost in Japan before Fleury's arrival: the Canadian Liaison Mission (CLM) in Tokyo—Ottawa's *de facto* legation accredited, not to the Japanese government, but to the US occupation forces. While the Department of National Defence had intended CMMFE to be separate from CLM, they eventually decided that Fleury would have “the dual capacity of military adviser to our head of mission and ... liaison officer to GHQ United Nations Command.”<sup>48</sup> In essence, Fleury and his successors were Canada's formal representative to the American-led forces in Korea as well as its military *attaché* in Tokyo. In 1950, Arthur Menzies was the head of CLM, having just taken over from the noted Canadian Japanologist and diplomat Herbert Norman. Menzies would be a ubiquitous presence in Japan during the war, meeting with seemingly every Canadian who visited enroute for Korea. On 13 December 1950, one of his first acts as CLM head was to visit the troopship *Private Joe P. Martinez* in Yokohama, which was carrying a contingent of CASF soldiers bound for Pusan.<sup>49</sup> Reportedly, many Canadian soldiers were impressed by Menzies's diplomatic charms. In his semi-fictionalised memoir of the Korean War, writer Vince Courtenay has his protagonist Joe Dowey introduced to Menzies on his return from R&R in Tokyo. “Menzies gives Dowey a pat on the back. ‘Keep up the good work, Dowey!’ He has remembered Dowey's name, at least for that moment. It thrills the young soldier.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Menzies's alleged hospitality to CASF soldiers even created misunderstandings. In July 1951, Corporal Fred Woroch wrote him having “read in a paper somewhere in Korea” that Menzies had offered to let CASF soldiers stay at CLM! Menzies politely responded that while he and his wife Sheila were “happy to entertain you at lunch,” it was not “practical to have servicemen come and stay with us in the Legation residence.”<sup>51</sup> More officially, CLM reports were a key source of wartime information for Ottawa. Menzies himself visited Korea five times

<sup>48</sup> Escott Reid to Arnold Heeney, 17 September 1950, in *Documents in Canadian External Relations*, vol. 16 (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1996), 117-18.

<sup>49</sup> WD, CMMFE, 13 December 1950, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC; and Arthur Menzies to Family, 17 December 1950, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 20, file 7, LAC.

<sup>50</sup> Vince Courtenay, *Love and Duty: A Canadian Remembers the Korean War* (Seoul: Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs, 2011), 243-44. Courtenay refers to his book as a “nonfiction documentary novel.”

<sup>51</sup> Fred Woroch to Menzies, 4 July 1951; and Menzies to Woroch, 23 July 1951, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 30, file 18, LAC.



Arthur Menzies sits with Brigadier John Rockingham during his visit to Korea, October 1951. Seated with them is British General James Cassels (at left), commander of the 1st Commonwealth Division, as well as Brigadier Paul Bernatchez (right), then head of CMMFE. [Victor Wilfred Jewkes, CWM, 19880242-004, Image 2]

during the conflict, of which the most publicised trip was in October 1951. And while such visits were always a headache for Brigadier Rockingham and the 25th Infantry Brigade, they were useful fact-finding missions for Ottawa.<sup>52</sup>

While CMMFE would remain close to the centre of power in Tokyo, subsequent Canadian units would be based in Japanese cities further west to facilitate communications with its forces in Korea. On 6 May 1951, 2 CAU and 25 CRG disembarked in the port of Kure, a naval base on the Inland Sea south of Hiroshima. Unlike American-dominated Tokyo, Kure was the centre of the Australian-dominated

<sup>52</sup> For Menzies' five visits to Korea, see "Mr. A. R. Menzies," 27 April 2004, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 52, file 11, LAC. For the October 1951 visit, his second, see Menzies to Lester Pearson, 31 October 1951, R112-0-2-E, vol. 20810, file 7-10-5, part 2, LAC; Menzies to Parents, 28 October 1951, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 20, file 10, LAC; and Rockingham, "Recollections of Korea," 61-62.



The Canadian transit camp at Hiro, in the southern suburbs of Kure, April 1953. [Robert S. Peacock, CWM, 20070056-012, Plate 94]

Commonwealth occupation forces in Japan.<sup>53</sup> There, BCOF transport was on hand to take the Canadians to their new facilities, “midway between Kure and [the suburb of] Hiro in the Australian Zone.”<sup>54</sup> Along with the smaller units of the Canadian Communications Zone Detachments, this formed the bulk of Canadian forces deployed to Japan during the war. By August 1951, when Fleury and Menzies toured Kure, the latter could report that there were “nearly 1,500 Canadians” using the “excellent barracks, training facilities, hospital accommodation, storage warehouses, etc., built up by BCOF in the early years of the occupation.”<sup>55</sup>

One of the most useful sites provided by BCOF was the Commonwealth Division Battle School at Haramura. Located at a

<sup>53</sup> During the occupation, Britain let Australia represent the Commonwealth in Japan, both on the Allied Council for Japan and as commander of BCOF. In late 1945, nearly a third of BCOF’s 35,456 servicemen were Australians, a ratio that later increased. See Geoffrey Bolton, “Australia and the Occupation of Japan,” in *The British Commonwealth and the Allied Occupation of Japan, 1945-1952*, ed. Ian Nish (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 57.

<sup>54</sup> WD, 2 CAU, 6 May 1951, R112-0-2-E, vol. 35994, LAC; and WD, 25 CRG, 6 May 1951, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18432, LAC.

<sup>55</sup> Menzies to Pearson, 10 August 1951, R112-0-2-E, vol. 20811, file 7-10-5, part 2, LAC.

former Japanese calvary base northeast of Kure, the site allowed Canadians to practice fighting over hilly terrain like that found in Korea. Training under British Lieutenant-Colonel M. R. Lonsdale, an eccentric but professional instructor who went around “in shirts sleeves or bare-chested, as the mood fits,” recruits were taught platoon-level tactics in a series of live-fire exercises. When Menzies and Fleury visited in 1951, a mock hill assault was conducted, preceded by mortar and machinegun fire. “With this live ammunition whistling in over their heads, platoons of infantry assaulted the hill, carrying full combat equipment and fifty rounds of ammunition.”<sup>56</sup> Camp life was hard; the Japanese-style barracks were sparsely furnished and rations drawn from British and Australian stores meant lots of tea and mutton.<sup>57</sup> The heat was also notorious; simply standing in the sun to watch was enough to force Menzies into the shade of a jeep “with a piece of cardboard to fan myself.”<sup>58</sup> Accidents also occurred. In October 1952, an explosion during small arms training killed two Canadians and wounded nineteen others.<sup>59</sup> Still, the training did improve the Canadians’ combat efficiency and most men recalled their time there positively. Lieutenant Ramsey Withers, a future Chief of the Defence Staff, later called his wartime tour at Haramura “the most interesting four months I’ve ever had in my life.”<sup>60</sup>

For most Canadian soldiers, their first extended encounter with Japanese civilians likely came in the form of hired help on base. Known locally as “indigenous labour,” these workers were used by all the units in Kure, usually as stevedores, cooks or truck drivers. Initially, these workers were paid by the Canadian Army, but in July 1954 there was a move to a subcontracted “indirect hire” system. On a personal level, these workplace relationships were professional but often cool. When Lieutenant Bob Ringma took over Canada’s section of Kure’s Commonwealth-operated ordnance depot, he had under

<sup>56</sup> Menzies to Pearson, 10 August 1951, R112-0-2-E, vol. 20811, file 7-10-5, part 2, LAC.

<sup>57</sup> For accounts of life at Haramura, see Bill Boss, “Day of Soft Layover for Canadians in Japan Over,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 25 July 1952, 4; and Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 59-62.

<sup>58</sup> Menzies to Pearson, 10 August 1951, R112-0-2-E, vol. 20811, file 7-10-5, part 2, LAC.

<sup>59</sup> WD, CMMFE, 17 October 1952, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC; and “Army Releases Names of Canadian Casualties,” *Globe and Mail*, 20 October 1952, 2.

<sup>60</sup> John Gardam, *Korea Volunteer: An Oral History from Those Who Were There* (Burnstown, ON: General Store, 1994), 138.



The hills of Haramura, near the Commonwealth Division Battle School, April 1953. [Robert S. Peacock, CWM, 20070056-012, Plate 98]

his command a warrant officer, “about a dozen Canadian soldiers ... and a crew of Japanese labourers.” They were “respectful but neither friendly nor unfriendly,” Ringma recalled, and would politely bow and doff their caps—“many of which were old Japanese Army hats”—when approached.<sup>61</sup> The reason for this lukewarm attitude seems obvious. As many of the workers were former Imperial Japanese Army soldiers—as Ringma’s note about their hats implies—such men likely had mixed feelings about the foreign soldiers now living in their country. Additionally, it tells us something about Japanese perceptions of UN soldiers. During the Korean War, local press reports began complaining sensationally of a “reign of terror” in Kure by foreign soldiers, including Canadians. As Bill Boss reported, these incidents were not caused by the 600 Canadians working in Kure, who were “well-behaved.” Rather, it was “the final fling of [our] troops on the way home that has given Canadians service men a bad name.” Moreover, most cases amounted to petty crime; “No

<sup>61</sup> Bob Ringma, *M\*L\*B\*U: Full Monty in Korea* (Burnstown, ON: General Store, 2004), 118.

Canadian has been charged with murder in Kure,” Boss noted.<sup>62</sup> Still, as the *Ottawa Citizen* editorialised after reading Boss’s report, if overstated, “there is no room for complacency regarding the situation in which Canadians in Kure find themselves.” To that end, the Army needed to improve “all official recreation services for transients” and to formalise ties with the Japanese to ensure their soldiers were properly supervised while on leave.<sup>63</sup>

Even leaving aside murder, prostitution and drunkenness, this left plenty of opportunities for run-ins with the law, both Canadian and UN military as well as Japanese civilian. One entry in CMMFE’s war diary gave a fair range of possible crimes, running from the banal to the bizarre: “A/B Blair (RCN), who was tried by court martial, was found not guilty of robbery with violence but guilty of robbery only. ... Sgt Conway, of Hiro, who committed a civil offence, settled his case out of court by paying ¥5000 for damages. ... Maj Brown called concerning the case of Pte Butts who was involved in a fracas with the head of the local Communist Party.”<sup>64</sup> And even staying within the law, there remained plenty of room for trouble. One wild incident was later related by Eddy Weetaltuk. Convinced by a friend to take a rickshaw back to their R&R hotel, he was given a whip by his driver and told “to use it on him if he didn’t go fast enough.” Severely drunk, Weetaltuk flogged the man mercilessly through the streets of Tokyo, imagining he was riding his childhood dogsled back home. “Now that I recall the events,” Weetaltuk wrote years afterwards, “I am sure he must have been quite scared. ... I gave five dollars to my driver to ease my conscience for having treated him the way I did.”<sup>65</sup> However, it is equally true that many soldiers could play against type. In December 1951, Sheila Menzies, Arthur’s wife, received a call at CLM from a soldier who “asked if he and his friends could come up for a party.” “I had thought they would be rather odd because of their rude approach,” Sheila admitted in a letter home, “but [they] turned out to be three very nice non-commissioned officers here on R. and R. leave—all of the quiet type who did not want to paint the town like all their buddies at the camp, but just wanted a friendly visit

<sup>62</sup> Bill Boss, “Reign of Terror Not Canadian-Created,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 16 December 1952, 17; and Bill Boss, “Reputation of Canadians in Japan Areas Improving,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 December 1952, 39.

<sup>63</sup> “Soldiers’ Behavior in Japan,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 20 December 1952, 34.

<sup>64</sup> WD, CMMFE, entry 16 June 1952, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC.

<sup>65</sup> Weetaltuk and Martin, *From the Tundra to the Trenches*, 106-07.

with some Canadians—so we enjoyed having them.”<sup>66</sup> Ultimately, as Canadian Court Reporter Dick Pucci later claimed, most crimes committed by soldiers in Japan and Korea, “except for the strictly military offences, were the same as you would find in any comparable group in Canada,” with most involving “stupidity and alcohol.”<sup>67</sup>

New troubles arose with the end of the Japanese occupation in April 1952.<sup>68</sup> One of the most serious was the need to renegotiate the terms under which Canadian soldiers served in Japan; once the occupation ended they could be exposed to the full extent of Japanese law.<sup>69</sup> On 8 April, Lester Pearson formally suggested to Prime Minister St. Laurent that they “ask Japan to agree to the same treatment which was to be accorded US forces, plus certain additional benefits such as immunity from Japanese criminal jurisdiction,” a stipulation he thought they might accept since “Canadian troops were to remain in Japan only for the duration of the Korean conflict.”<sup>70</sup> The assumption was to prove as wrong as it was historically ignorant. During the nineteenth century, Japan had laboured under a set of “unequal treaties” granting the European imperial powers extraterritoriality over their nationals in the country. This had been a national embarrassment and their revision had been a major aim of Japanese diplomacy.<sup>71</sup> Now, after six further years of Allied occupation, few Japanese wanted new limits on their sovereignty, a view that was only reinforced by the accounts of rowdy Canadian soldiers in Kure.<sup>72</sup> As talks dragged on, rumours began to spread. In September 1952, British journalist R. M. MacColl claimed

<sup>66</sup> Sheila Menzies to Mr. and Mrs. Menzies, 2 December 1951, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 20, file 10, LAC.

<sup>67</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 262-263.

<sup>68</sup> Some were mundane; CMMFE found communications disrupted in May as the phone lines reverted to Japanese control. “We have quite a number of ‘Moshi Moshi’ calls [Japan’s universal phone greeting] nowadays,” as its war diary noted. See WD, CMMFE, 13 May 1952, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC.

<sup>69</sup> Menzies to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs (USSEA), 28 January 1952; Claxton to Pearson, 15 January 1952; and Secretary of State for External Affairs to Embassy Washington, 28 January 1952, R112-0-2-E, vol. 5196, file HQS15-13-20, LAC.

<sup>70</sup> “Japan; Status of Canadian Forces...,” 8 April 1952, R165-0-5-E, reel T-2368, LAC.

<sup>71</sup> For the revision of extraterritoriality in Japan, see Pär Kristoffer Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), chapter 6.

<sup>72</sup> Bill Boss, “Contentends Jurisdiction Must be With Man’s Army,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 19 December 1952, 14.

Ottawa was “so dissatisfied” about the negotiations with Tokyo that it was “considering giving up Japan as a base altogether.”<sup>73</sup> This forced Defence Minister Brooke Claxton to publicly deny the charges, admitting that if talks were “disappointingly slow,” he still expected that a deal would eventually be signed.<sup>74</sup>

MacColl’s rumour, however, was true; Ottawa *had* debated moving its operations to Korea. But as its newly appointed Ambassador Robert Mayhew wryly advised in October 1953, Tokyo “might very well feel the concern of a landlord on seeing his defaulting tenant departing with all his distrainable goods and chattels” if Canada tried to do so. More seriously, he noted that even if most Canadians moved to Korea, there would still be some soldiers in Japan on leave that would need diplomatic arrangements in place if they got into trouble as well as rest facilities for their use.<sup>75</sup> Ultimately, it was only with the aid of American mediation that a temporary deal on criminal jurisdiction was brokered in October 1953 and a formal agreement ratified between Japan, Canada and the other UN forces on 19 February 1954. In it, Tokyo agreed to allow UN soldiers and their dependants to reside in Japan for the duration of UN operations in Korea on the understanding that while Japanese laws would not apply to them in all instances, they would still have to defer to local regulations in certain cases.<sup>76</sup> Over the summer of 1954, Japan’s Diet enacted a series of new laws to enforce the new agreement, as CMMFE dutifully relayed to Ottawa.<sup>77</sup>

A few months after the 1954 UN Agreement went into effect, St. Laurent visited Japan. By this point, as the new CMMFE head Brigadier Ronald Morton reported, Japanese views of Canada had reached an all time high: “Government officials, newspapers, the

<sup>73</sup> R. M. MacColl, “Canada May Give Up Japan as a Base,” *China Mail* (Hong Kong), 10 September 1952, 1.

<sup>74</sup> “Deny Canadians Planning to Withdraw from Japan,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 September 1952, 1, 20.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Mayhew to USSEA, 20 October 1953, R112-0-2-E, vol. 5196, file HQS15-13-20, LAC.

<sup>76</sup> For the text of both agreements and their articles, see *Protocol on the Exercise of Criminal Jurisdiction over United Nations Forces in Japan, Treaty Series 1953, No. 27* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 195[?]); and *Agreement Regarding the Status of the United Nations Forces in Japan, Treaty Series 1954, No. 13* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1959).

<sup>77</sup> R. E. A. Morton to Chief of the General Staff, 13 August 1954, 20 August 1954; 7 September 1954 and Enclosures, Kardex 81/520/1700-1, Box 146, File 1, Directorate of History and Heritage.



Japanese radio and ordinary people constantly express a friendly interest—and often an enthusiasm—for Canada and her people.” The reasons for this positivity were many: “They like our national characteristics, our stability, our comparative good manners and friendliness...” But most important from a military viewpoint was the fact that they “generally appreciate that we are not Americans or Australians.” Moreover, as only a minor player in the war against Japan, “It is undoubtedly an advantage to us that we never participated in the Pacific War after Hong Kong, which they have forgotten and so presume that all Canadians do likewise.” As Morton concluded, “Personnel of the Canadian Army stationed in Japan have, of course, worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the Japanese, especially in relation to our soldiers on leave.”<sup>78</sup> While we might temper such views given the Canadian misdemeanours already noted, the broad stroke of Morton’s conclusion rings true. Less numerous than the Australians and not intending to stay permanently like the Americans, Canada’s military presence was large enough to reintroduce Japan to Canadians via soldiers’ tales and war correspondents’ reports, but not large enough to alienate the Japanese by its ubiquity.

#### **REAL LIFE: CANADIAN SOLDIERS DISCOVER JAPAN**

*I'll never forget Tokyo that August night  
 When I stepped off the plane from a hurried flight  
 The city so different and smelly and hot  
 And I disliked it all, right there on the spot  
 But travelling round Tokyo, I got to know the place  
 And I soon got intrigued by this Japanese race  
 I liked all the people and my job too  
 “Oxies” [Occidentals] and Asians – my days were too few.<sup>79</sup>*

This bit of self-described soldier’s “doggerel” was penned by Ronald Morton after he had been appointed head of CMMFE in August 1952, replacing Brigadier A. B. Connolly for his part in sending Canadian soldiers to police the notorious Korean POW camp at

<sup>78</sup> WD, CMMFE, Routine Report No. 40, April 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC.

<sup>79</sup> R. E. A. Morton, “Doggerel of a Canadian Soldier,” R3776-0-5-E, file 8, LAC.

Kōjedo.<sup>80</sup> Remaining at CMMFE until October 1954, Morton made a life for himself in Tokyo with his wife, daughter and fifteen-year-old son, Desmond. Years later, historian Desmond Morton recalled his time in Japan fondly: “The Canadian Embassy helped find us a house in the Sugamo district of Tokyo ... adjusting to Japanese lifestyle under the tutelage of our ‘head boy,’ Takeda-san, a stout ‘Cook-san,’ and two charming housemaids.” Initially, Desmond studied at the Canadian Academy, a missionary school in Kobe headed by Reverend Howard Norman and the former alma mater of Arthur Menzies. (As Brigadier Morton told Menzies, this was because “they don’t want to change him from the Ontario curriculum he has been used to.”) In the summer, however:

My father arranged for me [...] to spend July and August working at the Canadian Army’s administrative unit (2 CAU) in Hiro, near Kure. Under the supervision and guidance of Sergeant Vince Alkins, a charming, wise, and utterly regimental Trinidadian, I was ‘broken in’ to Army administration and management in every part of the unit from the quartermaster’s stores to the Central Registry and the kitchens. Vince even took me to visit Hiroshima, an emotional experience for both of us.

In the end, these experiences convinced Desmond to join the army. While his flatfeet prevented an active posting, he was still “judged adequate to command cooks, clerks, and truck drivers in the Army Service Corps, the very branch Vince Alkins had prepared me for at Hiro.”<sup>81</sup>

As the Morton family reveals, Japan was a new and varied experience for Canadians during the Korean War.<sup>82</sup> As Morton himself confessed in his poetry, he had never lived abroad until he was posted

<sup>80</sup> For this incident, see Bercuson, *True Patriot*, 235-38; and Stairs, *Diplomacy of Constraint*, 249-58.

<sup>81</sup> Desmond Morton, “Is History Another Word for Experience? Morton’s Confessions,” *Canadian Historical Review* 92, 4 (December 2011): 678-81; and Menzies to Isabel Skelton, 31 August 1952, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 20, file 12, LAC. See also Morton’s preface to Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, viii-x.

<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the Canadian experience in Japan was comparable to the life of other Canadian servicemembers garrisoned abroad during the early Cold War. For the other obvious comparison, see Isabel Campbell, *Unlikely Diplomats: The Canadian Brigade in Germany, 1951-64* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013).

to Britain during the Second World War: “So, when I reached Japan in Fifty Two / My travels abroad had been very few.”<sup>83</sup> Like him, most Canadians arrived with “a confusing mixture of emotions,” as gunner Andrew Moffat later recalled. Along with typical soldierly worries about combat and missing loved ones, there was now a novel “excitement of entering a new cultural world ... the utterly new feeling of being a ‘minority’ surrounded by a very visible ‘majority.’”<sup>84</sup> Most soldiers would recall these experiences positively; in researching this article, I was unable to find a single veteran who later spoke ill of Japan. “We really had ... a very nice holiday,” one remembered in a typical assessment. “It was really a pleasure to be over there.”<sup>85</sup> For some, Japan was associated with R&R excess. For others it was their workplace, a place with ample food and shopping or just somewhere to avoid the war in Korea. But for all, Japan proved memorable.

For most Canadian servicemembers, experiences of Japan began the moment the country became visible from the deck of their ship or the window of their airplane. For one cohort of Canadians arriving aboard the *Joe P. Martinez*, this came as they docked at Yokohama in October 1951. “Faces were glued to the window until darkness,” their war diary reported. “This was our first closeup view of the Orient and the troops were not going to miss a thing.”<sup>86</sup> For those arriving at Haneda, as Morton had observed, it was the smell that hit you. “As soon as you opened the door of the aircraft,” Colonel Arthur Byford recalled, “there was a very distinctive smell,” which he attributed to farmers’ use of nightsoil.<sup>87</sup> Entering Tokyo, it was the war scars and rebuilding efforts that struck Canadians; Japanese cars rigged to run on coal or wood instead of petrol were a common sight.<sup>88</sup> For many soldiers, some from smalltown Canada, one of the world’s largest cities was interest enough. Postwar Tokyo teemed with people, some dressed in western clothing, others in kimono and some in hybrid outfits. Andrew Moffat saw local businessmen

<sup>83</sup> Morton, “Doggerel of a Canadian Soldier.”

<sup>84</sup> Moffat, *Korea Memories*, 12.

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Leslie Pike, 12 January 2004, 20020121-189, Canadian War Museum (CWM).

<sup>86</sup> Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 55.

<sup>87</sup> Interview with Arthur Byford, 17 November 2003, 20020121-158, CWM. That is, human excrement. Nightsoil was also commonly used as a fertilizer in Korea.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Arthur Byford; and Pierre Berton, *My Times: Living with History, 1947-1995* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1995), 66.

in “western style suits” with “Japanese zōri [sandals] and in bare feet.”<sup>89</sup> For Quebecois soldier Charly Forbes, Ginza was “a huge moving flower bed. The Japanese in their kimono were just so many flowers roaming this street adorned with lanterns, pennants, dragons, and brightly coloured banners.”<sup>90</sup> Many memories were tinged by nostalgia. In the semi-fictional remembrances of Joe Dowey, modern life was “a very long way from the Tokyo that had been still getting to her feet after the devastating bombings of World War Two. That Tokyo was gone long ago. ... It was something only the privileged fellow who had fought in Korea had experienced. ... The old was gone and only sensed in memory.”<sup>91</sup>

As noted above, the Canadian experience in Japan has typically been dominated by stories of R&R misconduct and there is truth to this. For some, R&R conformed to the template set by Jacket Coates. Corporal Les Butts, outlining his eight-day excursion, recalled a hotel “with lots of girls; you can have a different one each night if you want” as well as plenty of drinking.<sup>92</sup> But other Canadians had different stories, particularly those working in Japan long term. For Clarence Fisher, a quartermaster sergeant in Tokyo, R&R was something he prepared for others:

Because I was there for several months, I met a lot of our men and I also saw a lot of Japan. And I loved it. Getting the posting there was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Because I was working in Japan, as opposed to just passing through, I was able to meet more of the Japanese and see more of their country than the fellows who were just there for a few days. I love the Japanese and I grew to love their country. I wandered down the streets, down to the old Imperial Palace, to the Ginza, everywhere. I climbed Mount Fuji and travelled around the country. I smelled the beautiful odour of Tokyo in the spring when the blossoms came out, and I was invited to Japanese homes once or twice a month.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Moffat, *Korea Memories*, 120.

<sup>90</sup> J. Charles Forbes, *Fantassin: Pour mon pays, la gloire et... des prunes* (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 1994), 326.

<sup>91</sup> Courtenay, *Love and Duty*, 221.

<sup>92</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 292-93.

<sup>93</sup> John Melady, *Korea: Canada's Forgotten War*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 260.

As Fisher's testimony demonstrates, historians should be cautious in classifying certain Korean War experiences as normal and others aberrant. Canadians' experience of Japan was a more diverse event for its participants than simplistic accounts of wine and women typically suggest.

One of the most evocative expressions of such varied conduct occurred in September 1952, when Private Earl MacMillan of Medicine Hat arrived home with what would be the first of many by Canadians back from Korea: A Japanese wife. Like the Second World War, the Korean War created a small cohort of Canadian war brides. For twenty-three-year-old Matsuno Toasaka, her first glimpse of her future *fiancé* came in April 1951 when MacMillan visited her brother's giftshop in Kure. "I wasn't a very good customer," MacMillan later joked to the press. "But I saw her every day for five months and we were married a year ago." The couple's return home to Alberta went well, with both MacMillan's family and members of the local Japanese community turning out to greet them.<sup>94</sup> Despite rumours that "officers were told to discourage these marriages," a fact seemingly reinforced by a mandatory ninety-day wait period, CMMFE's reticence came as much from the bureaucratic headache, necessitating complex procedures to process immigration visas and other paperwork, than any anti-Japanese racism.<sup>95</sup> "This task is becoming increasingly onerous and exacting," one official report complained. "Will headaches never cease?" the war diary of 2 CAU asked in August 1954 as yet another marriage was officiated in Hiro.<sup>96</sup> While some brides-to-be, as Red Cross worker Dorothea Wiens later noted, "had a rosy, unrealistic picture of Canada," most would adapt to their new Canadian lives, much as their British and Dutch counterparts had in 1945. Ultimately, sixty-eight Japanese war

<sup>94</sup> "Dimpled Japanese Bride: Canadian Went to Shop Returned to Store Daily," *Globe and Mail*, 6 September 1952, 7; and "First Jap War Bride Reaches Canada Home," *Globe and Mail*, 11 September 1952, 8.

<sup>95</sup> Though racism certainly existed within the system. Corporal Bert Clinton later claimed a bigoted New Zealand padre at Ebisu flat out refused to officiate his marriage in July 1954. But most soldiers were undeterred; Clinton had a Canadian Embassy official marry them instead. See Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 349. See also, "He Defends Inter-Racial Marriages," *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 September 1954, 25.

<sup>96</sup> WD, CMMFE, "Annual Report," March 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC; and WD, 2 CAU, 3 August 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 35994, LAC. For the rumours, see Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 349.

brides would proceed to Canada.<sup>97</sup> Despite clichés about ingrained Japanese reticence, the response of the new Mrs. MacMillan when asked whether she would enjoy Canada was quite candid: “I’ll try,” she replied, “I’ll try.”<sup>98</sup>

Shopping was another experience that Japan offered servicemembers. As they discovered, prices were cheap in Japan and many local products were of surprisingly high quality. For Colonel Robert Peacock, an official stop in Hiroshima was also an opportunity to buy “pearls, silk and other items for my fiancée and my parents at somewhat better terms than normal.”<sup>99</sup> For RCAF airmen on the North America to Japan airlift, as *Maclean’s* journalist Pierre Berton recorded, layovers in Tokyo allowed for visits to Ginza, “where you can buy Japanese imitations of Parker ’51 pens and Ronson lighters for a song.”<sup>100</sup> As Lieutenant-Commander Douglas Meredith on HMCS *Nootka* noted, all Japanese ports had shops catering to sailors. In Sasebo, one of the main ports for the UN navies during the war, he visited “Black Market Alley.” “There’s very little black marketish about it,” Meredith admitted in his diary. “The stores are all open fronted, prices comparatively cheap. Toys, silk, Chinaware and souvenirs, pearls all also to be had—cultivated ones at that.”<sup>101</sup> Some purchases even had military applications. As Andrew Moffat related, he and a friend, visiting a blacksmith before heading to Korea, were able to convince the owner to make them two trench knives of amazingly high quality.<sup>102</sup> In May 1953, newly-appointed Brigadier Jean Allard accurately plotted all major Chinese positions along his section of the front using a high-powered telescope bought in Japan, allowing Canadian tanks “to conduct a destructive shoot

<sup>97</sup> Frances Martin Day, Phyllis Spence and Barbara Ladouceur, *Women Overseas: Memoirs of the Canadian Red Cross (Overseas Detachment)* (Vancouver: Ronsdale, 1998), 346-47; and Wood, *Strange Battleground*, 153.

<sup>98</sup> “Dimpled Japanese Bride,” 7.

<sup>99</sup> Robert S. Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum: A Platoon Commander Remembers Korea, 1952-1953* (Toronto: Lugus, 1994), 125.

<sup>100</sup> Pierre Berton, “Milk Run to Korea,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, 15 May 1951, 39.

<sup>101</sup> Douglas George Meredith, *Diary*, 12 February, 20010081-001, CWM. When he later got to Kure, Meredith found “the usual merchandise” available here as well. See *Diary*, 6 March 1952.

<sup>102</sup> Moffat, *Korea Memories*, 25-27.



Shops catering to UN soldiers near the Australian zone of Kure, April 1953. [John Thomas Redmond, CWM, 20110039-004, Plate 125]

each day as soon as the morning mists had lifted sufficiently to allow direct observation.”<sup>103</sup>

Good food and hospitality were other benefits. For soldiers fed-up with military rations, Japan offered numerous opportunities for fine dining at cheap prices and for the more daring there were always local Japanese dishes to try. Given the ubiquitous availability of Asian cuisine in Canada today, there is a certain amusement in hearing Canadians’ first experience with “exotic” Japanese food like sushi or daikon. “The meal started off with raw fish dipped in a hot sauce,” the rather bemused war correspondent Dave McIntosh wrote in December 1950, as he manoeuvred his chopsticks “about as deftly as a couple of ax handles.”<sup>104</sup> For Clarence Fisher, “Japanese food was strange at first, but I tried it all—raw fish, octopus, the biggest prawns I ever saw, soups, rice dishes, even fish eyes.”<sup>105</sup> For men living in muddy Korean dugouts, Japan’s famous bath culture was also a pleasure. Not only were they pampered by female bath attendants, but the then common Japanese practice of mixed-gender bathing also proved a memorable culture shock.<sup>106</sup> There were also tourism opportunities. “The highlight of my visit to Japan,” Robert Peacock later claimed, “was a day trip to Hiroshima and the island shrine of Miya Jima.” At this Shinto temple on the Inland Sea, famous for its floating *torii*, Peacock was “the only westerner in sight for the whole day and [I] had a wonderful time wandering and enjoying being a tourist with my camera.”<sup>107</sup> For units based in Japan such excursions were routine as the site was popular with BCOF. “Boat trip to Miya Jima where sight seeing and swimming was enjoyed,” the war diary of the Canadians at Kure’s ordnance depot noted in August 1954. “Thirty-two all ranks attended.”<sup>108</sup>

<sup>103</sup> William Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 362.

<sup>104</sup> Dave McIntosh, “Took Off Shoes to Enter Home for Japanese Dinner,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 7 December 1950, 41.

<sup>105</sup> Melady, *Canada’s Forgotten War*, 260. Other Canadian encounters with Japanese cooking were less successful. See Moffat, *Korean Memories*, 17-19; and Courtney, *Love and Duty*, 233-34.

<sup>106</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 292; Moffat, *Korea Memories*, 16-17; Forbes, *Fantassin*, 326; and Ringma, *Full Monty*, 113-114. Mixed bathing also makes an appearance in James Michener’s Korean War novel *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* (New York: Random House, 1953), 67-68, as well as its 1954 Hollywood adaptation.

<sup>107</sup> Peacock, *Kim-chi, Asahi and Rum*, 125.

<sup>108</sup> WD, Canadian Section Britcom Base Ordnance Depot, 1 August 1954, R112-0-2-E, vol. 18441, LAC.





“Boat trip to Miya Jima...” The famous floating torii of the Shinto shrine at Itsukushima, as photographed by a visiting Canadian soldier, 1953. [E.L. Lawson, CWM, 19840076-002, Plate 197]

But there were also more uncomfortable shades to the Canadian presence in Japan. The signs of Japan's defeat were everywhere in 1950 and this irony was widely noted. Landing at Haneda, Pierre Berton noted that this was "in the lee of a blasted Zero factory." The absurdity was palpable: "It is less than six years since the last war ended. ... The hated Japanese have become our pals; the Chinese, once our comrades-in-arms, have become our bitter foes."<sup>109</sup> "I couldn't help but look about me at the Japanese who were passing by on the street or who were waiting on me in shops, and wondering what they were doing during the Second War," Andrew Moffat later admitted. After all, "we had been made well aware of the atrocities committed by the Japanese, especially against Allied prisoners—including a lot of Canadians taken at Hong Kong."<sup>110</sup> Studying Kure from HMCS *Nootka*, Douglas Meredith observed that their berth was "next door to the drydock in which the [battleships] 'Yamato' and 'Ise' were built."<sup>111</sup> Yet, for some, personal experience exposed the gap between wartime spin and reality. "For most of us, the way the Japanese treated us was a revelation," Eddy Weetaltuk asserted. "It was hard to believe that they were once our enemies. It made me realise that politicians can make you believe that wonderful people are barbarians. Once you are convinced of it, it is easy to abuse and kill people, because you believe you are the good ones and the others are just evil."<sup>112</sup> At Kure, Bob Ringma recalled hearing his Japanese workers meeting in a nearby building to relax. "Shouts of 'banzai, banzai' would erupt and get my imagination going. I had heard the word in wartime movies and was sure it meant something sinister." Yet, as he quickly realised, "The meetings were probably just workers getting together but with the end of World War II just six years earlier, I imagined a plot to get back at the imperialist Canadians ... However it was used, in the context in which I heard it ringing from the nearby meeting place, I learned that it was no threat to us."<sup>113</sup>

Other servicemen with a fondness for photography often documented the lives of ordinary citizens, especially children who had nothing to do with the war and often showed innate curiosity towards

<sup>109</sup> Berton, *My Times*, 66. Cf. Berton, "Milk Run to Korea," 39.

<sup>110</sup> Moffat, *Korean Memories*, 121.

<sup>111</sup> Meredith, *Diary*, 7 March 1952.

<sup>112</sup> Weetaltuk and Martin, *From the Tundra to the Trenches*, 109.

<sup>113</sup> Ringma, *Full Monty*, 118.



Japanese children pose for a Canadian soldier on Itsukushima, 1953. [F.L. Lawson, CWM, 19840076-002, Plate 205]

them. “It was always a pleasure to see the children on their way to or from school,” Bob Ringma wrote later. “They were well scrubbed and, to my view, happy, well fed and well loved.”<sup>114</sup> For Canadians who had been told how violent and barbaric the Japanese were during the Pacific War, the innocence of childhood was a reminder of their common humanity. Nor did the children, like their parents, have any reservations about interacting with foreign soldiers. In taking a train just as school was getting out, Sergeant John Richardson was amazed at their fearless curiosity: “They would wave and come right up to the windows, friendly and afraid of bugger all.”<sup>115</sup> Many Canadians had no trouble getting children to pose for their cameras as they toured the country.

But the most emotional event for servicemen was a trip to Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Given that Hiroshima was near Kure, many Canadians visited the city and saw for themselves the power of the atomic bomb. “I will always remember seeing the pictures of devastation caused by the bomb,” Sergeant Gordon Peacock noted many years later. “It was a very sobering place to visit.”<sup>116</sup> Others recalled the shadows of people imprinted on the city’s concrete by the heat of the blast or the appearance of survivors, their burned and scarred skin resembling “a tanned alligator.”<sup>117</sup> “My feelings were much the same as those aroused by looking at Dachau or Auschwitz,” Red Cross worker Dorothea Wiens stated emphatically. “Absolute horror.”<sup>118</sup> Yet such emotional appeals for the Japanese victims of the last war also clashed with the derision shown by some Canadian servicemembers towards Koreans suffering in the present conflict.

For many Canadians, positive relations with the Japanese were often contrasted by equally poor interactions with Koreans. As Red Cross worker Jacqueline Robitaille recalled, “The Koreans wanted us to leave them alone. ... They seemed to hate the United Nations troops and that always puzzled me. In Japan, by contrast, we were treated with great courtesy.”<sup>119</sup> The cause is not hard to fathom. Having lost loved ones and seen their homes destroyed, to many Koreans the

<sup>114</sup> Ringma, *Full Monty*, 119.

<sup>115</sup> Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 328.

<sup>116</sup> Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, 169.

<sup>117</sup> Gardam, *Korea Volunteer*, 219; and George Douglas Imlay, *Written Memoir*, 19, 20130627-002, CWM.

<sup>118</sup> Day et al., *Women Overseas*, 347.

<sup>119</sup> Day et al., *Women Overseas*, 365.



“Absolute horror.” The broken dome of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial stands over a city still scarred by signs of the atomic bombing, April 1953. [Robert S. Peacock, CWM, 20070056-012, Plate 100]

Canadians were simply another alien army occupying their homeland and many observers would document cases of Canadian contempt or abuse towards South Korean soldiers and civilians.<sup>120</sup> Accordingly, it was easy for some to think that the Koreans were simply churlish. The state of Korea after years of war and (ironically) decades of Japanese colonialism, coupled with a certain racism, also played its part. “The Japanese seemed to be far more prosperous and their standard of living far higher than that of the Koreans,” Canadian Army chaplain Roy Durnford jotted in his wartime diary. “Needless to say, they are not at war and their industrial resources have not been wrecked so completely as in Korea. Their cultural life, also, seemed to me much higher than in Korea where that agrarian people live close to the ground.”<sup>121</sup> Even Canadian diplomat Hugh Keenleyside, by no means an ardent bigot, voiced knee-jerk disgust at the Korean refugees he saw while visiting Pusan from Tokyo as part of a UN relief mission in 1951.<sup>122</sup> How the soldiers in a city known for its pervasive VD could “touch these grimy and repulsive creatures is beyond me.”<sup>123</sup> While the Japanese were their former enemy, the courtesy and respect many Canadians received from them and their ostensibly higher level of “culture” contrasted poorly with the poverty, primitiveness and apparent ingratitude of many Koreans.

## CONCLUSION

In the end, having a military presence in Japan *was* important to the Canadian war effort in Korea. In 1950 and 1951, Canada’s lack of an occupation military presence in the county had hampered operations, forcing a reliance on Commonwealth or American facilities. After 1952, however, once the war had stalemated, these gaps were gradually filled by unique Canadian services, such as Tokyo’s Maple

<sup>120</sup> For several examples, see Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 58-61, chapter 4; Hepenstall, *Find the Dragon*, 266-68; and Pierre Berton, “The Real War in Korea,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, 1 August 1951, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Roy Durnford, Korean Diary, 11-12, 20110192-001, CWM.

<sup>122</sup> During the Second World War, for example, Keenleyside had spoken out forcefully against the internment of Japanese-Canadians. See Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism*, 20-21.

<sup>123</sup> Hugh Keenleyside, Travel Diary (Trip Around the World), 11 October 1951, R4217-0-8-E, vol. 30, file 14, LAC.

Leaf Club, while a new agreement between the UN forces and Tokyo was eventually negotiated.<sup>124</sup> For ordinary soldiers, meanwhile, Japan proved a memorable experience. And, if many were simply content to passively enjoy the hospitality the country had to offer, more reflective servicemen discovered that their wartime enemies had their positive sides too. Moreover, despite later generalisations, there was more to Canadian life in Japan than simply being “overpaid, oversexed and over here.” While R&R could involve prostitution and drinking, relations with the Japanese were far richer than this cynical truism implies. For many ordinary servicemembers, their legacy of visiting Japan was positive. For some, Japan was remembered in the pages of their photo albums, in the memories invoked by souvenirs that sat on their fireplaces or in the Japanese slang they had picked up on leave in Tokyo.<sup>125</sup> Others who had taken war brides returned with something more. Ultimately, Canada’s military presence in Japan played a greater role than anyone expected in helping to rebuild Japanese-Canadian relations after the trauma of the Pacific War.

Nor was this fact lost on contemporary observers. The Canadian government too realised that the army’s presence in Japan might be incorporated into its ongoing diplomatic efforts to rebuild postwar relations with the country. Three months before Louis St. Laurent’s visit to Japan in March 1954, Ambassador Robert Mayhew called on Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru to invite him to Canada when he next visited North America for high-level talks with the Americans. Mayhew told Yoshida that while St. Laurent would deliver the offer personally, they were aware of how busy he was and so wished to tenure the offer well in advance.<sup>126</sup> Six months after St. Laurent’s departure, Yoshida touched down in Canada at the start of his own world tour that would take him to France, West Germany, Italy, the Vatican, Great Britain and the United States. Landing

<sup>124</sup> By the time the club closed in April 1955, 80,000 UN soldiers had reportedly been entertained by its facilities. At its peak, it had also employed 23 Japanese workers under Canadian supervision. See “Tokyo Army Club Closes,” *Canadian Weekly Bulletin* 10, 26 (29 April 1955): 5.

<sup>125</sup> Most Canadians found Japanese an easier language to learn than Korean. As Korea was a former Japanese colony, their pidgin Japanese often sufficed in both countries. See “Hubba—Hubba!” *The Legionary*, March 1953, 13.

<sup>126</sup> “Memorandum for the Prime Minister,” 4 December 1953; R. L. Rogers to Shirahata Tomotake, 11 January 1954; S. Moreley Scott to USSEA, 11 January 1954; and R. L. Rogers to USSEA, 14 January 1954, R11214-0-7-E, vol. 184, file I-15-W, LAC.

at Vancouver, Yoshida became the first Japanese prime minister to ever visit Canada. Arriving in Ottawa, and reversing the scene from March, Yoshida and his daughter Asō Kazuko greeted St. Laurent. “The [Canadian] prime minister had visited Japan earlier that year,” Yoshida later recalled in his memoirs, “and had apparently formed a favorable impression of my country.” Explaining St. Laurent’s offer to the local press, Yoshida pressed for closer Japanese-Canadian ties, declaring that “Japan is happy to be a peaceful neighbor of Canada on the Pacific.” Perhaps his rapport with St. Laurent from their meeting in March, Yoshida mused later, explained why “the reception accorded me and my party wherever we went in the dominion was most encouraging.”<sup>127</sup>

And the Canadian military presence in Japan played a key role in this diplomatic dialogue. As St. Laurent asserted in his prepared remarks for Yoshida, both nations had “been drawn closer in recent years” due to the Korean War. “The Canadian servicemen in the three branches of our Armed Force who have seen service under the United Nations Command have enjoyed and praised the hospitality of your country,” he toasted.<sup>128</sup> This was seconded by Robert Mayhew. In a speech to the Tokyo-based Canada-Japan Society soon after he was made ambassador in 1953, Mayhew affirmed that Canada was “grateful for the facilities given by Japan for the United Nations forces in transit through or on rest and relaxation in this country.”<sup>129</sup> While in Canada a few months later, Mayhew likewise affirmed to the *Ottawa Citizen* that “Canadian troops in training or in transit in Japan have made a good many friends among the Japanese. The Japanese have treated our forces throughout with the strictest courtesies and helpfulness.”<sup>130</sup> While we should not idealise Canada’s

<sup>127</sup> Yoshida Shigeru, *Yoshida Shigeru: Last Meiji Man*, trans. Hiroshi Nara (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 84-85; “Gale News Kept from Yoshida: Japanese Premier Tours Vancouver,” *Vancouver Province*, 27 September 1954, 3; Austin Cross, “Yoshida Arrives in City,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 September 1954, 1; and J. A. Hume, “Yoshida Hopes Canada Believes in Japan as a ‘Good Neighbor’,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 28 September 1954, 3.

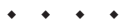
<sup>128</sup> Louis St. Laurent, “Notes ... in Honour of Prime Minister Yoshida,” 27 September 1954, R11214-0-7-E, vol. 285, LAC. It does not seem, however, that the prime minister was ever able to deliver this speech to Yoshida.

<sup>129</sup> Robert Mayhew, “Remarks ... At a Meeting of the Canada-Japan Society,” 29 January 1953, R15615-0-0-E, vol. 30, file 9, LAC.

<sup>130</sup> Austin F. Cross, “Canada’s Tokyo Envoy Here on Flying Visit,” *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 August 1953, 8.



military presence in Japan given the difficulties explored above, we should not be quick to dismiss them in overly pessimistic terms either. Ultimately, despite the difficulties in negotiating an agreement for Commonwealth forces to stay in Japan, Canada's Korean War contacts with Japan were not only a personal success for soldiers, but a diplomatic one for Ottawa as well.



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