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# How the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Served the Military in Korea, 1951–1956

MALLORY SCHWARTZ

*Abstract: The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) offered vital support to the Canadian forces engaged in the Korean theatre during and after the war, waged from 1950 to 1953. Though motivations varied between bureaucrats, service personnel, and broadcasters, all considered radio a means of evoking a sense of home on foreign soil or seas. To that end, the CBC went beyond reporting on the conflict to supply the armed forces with hundreds of hours of radio content, all carefully chosen to meet popular tastes, religious needs, and language requirements. Material passed from the CBC to the Far East by means of teletype circuits, shortwave transmitters and airmail parcels, filled with tapes and discs. This was only possible through collaboration with news agencies, Commonwealth broadcasters, and radio stations that served allied troops. This article traces the changing rationale, resources, and relationships on which the CBC relied as it helped to build a radio service for the armed forces, starting with the earliest efforts in 1951, shortly after the first Canadians arrived, and continuing until 1956, when few still remained in Korea.*

**I**N JUNE 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea in an act of aggression. Coming to the aid of South Korea was a United Nations force led by the United States in which Canadians served.<sup>1</sup> The National Service of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) was then fourteen years old and consisted of three radio networks: the French network and the Trans-Canada network,

<sup>1</sup> David J. Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills: The Canadian Army in the Korean War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), xi, xiii, 29–34.

which tended to be more serious and intellectual than the Dominion network. Together, they broadcast nearly 74,000 programs in 1951–1952.<sup>2</sup> The listening figures for some of the most popular shows were staggering. For example, the variety program *The Happy Gang* was known to attract roughly 30 percent of listeners in the crowded market of Toronto and 89 percent in smaller cities.<sup>3</sup> The International Service, based in Montreal, extended the CBC's reach to the distant shores of Europe and even to the South Pacific using shortwave transmitters at Sackville, New Brunswick.<sup>4</sup> Although the official inauguration only took place in February 1945, a desire to “keep Canadian servicemen and women overseas in touch with Canada” during the Second World War was one of the reasons for its establishment.<sup>5</sup> The needs of the armed forces overseas would have been familiar to over half of the first International Service staff, only recently discharged from the military.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, many people working for the CBC in the early 1950s were veterans of the Second World War. Others witnessed its horrors while employed as war correspondents or recording engineers with its Overseas Unit, which not only recorded the sounds of war, but also supplied the likes of the British Broadcasting Corporation with Canadian radio shows for the troops. Albert Edgar Powley, who travelled to London in 1943 to head the unit, later published a detailed record of their

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), *Annual Report 1951/52* (Ottawa: CBC, 1952), 31 and 38; Sandy Stewart, *From Coast to Coast: A Personal History of Radio in Canada* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1985), 114; Government of Canada, *The Canada Year Book, 1952–53: The official statistical annual of the resources, history, institutions, and social and economic conditions of Canada* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1953), 842–848.

<sup>3</sup> Ross A. Eaman, *Channels of Influence: CBC Audience Research and the Canadian Public* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 77.

<sup>4</sup> Canada, *The Canada Year Book, 1952–53*, 845.

<sup>5</sup> CBC, *CBC 1946: A Digest of Statements on the Policies, Administration and Programs of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, presented before the House of Commons Special Committee on Radio Broadcasting 1946*, by A. Davidson Dunton, Chairman of the Board of Directors; Dr. Augustin Frigon, General Manager; E.L. Bushnell, Director General of Programs; and Jean-Marie Beaudet, Director, CBC French Network (Toronto: CBC Publications, 1946), 17.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Siegel, *Radio Canada International: History and Development* (Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press, 1996), 73.

experiences.<sup>7</sup> There is no comparable account of the CBC's role in the Korean War. Given its social significance at home, its experiences of broadcasting overseas and this intimate knowledge of military life, it was perhaps unsurprising that the CBC's responsibilities in Korea went beyond war reporting. It also supported the war effort by bringing news and entertainment to the armed forces.

Not long after the 2nd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (2PPCLI) reached Korea in December 1950, the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel James R. Stone, reported:

Social amenities of a desirable type are lacking and nothing but hard work will alleviate the boredom that will soon set in. Lack of buildings will preclude the showing of movies, particularly during the winter. Beer is in fair supply, but the alcoholics in the battalion are already drinking the very poor liquor brewed in local bathtubs. Diseases, except venereal ones, probably will not be a problem during the winter, but as all fertilizing of fields is done with human excreta there is no doubt that there will be a health problem in the spring and summer.<sup>8</sup>

A visit to Korea in 1951 further convinced delegates from army headquarters that more needed to be done to ensure the well-being of Canadian troops. Radio was part of the remedy prescribed by senior officers and the Minister of National Defence Brooke Claxton. Histories, including personal accounts of the war, cited efforts to facilitate wholesome, healthy leisure whether in the form of organised sports or other recreation which the Maple Leaf Club offered to homesick men on leave in Tokyo. While they mentioned radio and the consumption of foreign entertainment, like the popular tunes played by

<sup>7</sup> A.E. Powley, *Broadcast from the Front: Canadian Radio Overseas in the Second World War* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1975), 41 and 74. Also, CBC, *We Have Been There: Broadcast on the CBC National Network* (Toronto: A publication of the CBC, 1942), 41-47, 56-64, 123-128; CBC, *CBC 1946*, 42-43; Stewart, *From Coast to Coast*, 68 and 71; Andrew Cowan to Vice President and General Manager, Regional Broadcasting, "CBC Armed Forces Broadcasting Service," 9 March 1965, vol. 17, file "CBC Armed Forces Service—proposals regarding. Nov. 1964–October 1965," Andrew Cowan fonds (MG 30 E 298), Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Ottawa.

<sup>8</sup> This is a popular passage, quoted in William Johnston, *A War of Patrols: Canadian Army Operations in Korea* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 58; quoted in Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 62; quoted in Directorate of History and Heritage, *Canada and the Korean War* (Ottawa: Art Global and the Department of National Defence in co-operation with the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2002), 14.

the US Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS), they did not delve deeply into the effort involved in its deliverance.<sup>9</sup> Similar provisions for the brigade in Germany, which had a radio station of its own by 1956, exemplified the selective transplantation of recreation and diversions from home, described by Sean M. Maloney as the “importation of Canadian culture.”<sup>10</sup> Its enlistment for wartime service differed from the fighting man’s own efforts to alleviate ennui, cope with horrors on the battlefield, and boost morale. Military historians contend that the mournful poetry and the sardonic satire of servicemen, published in battalion newspapers during the world wars, helped to create a distinct subculture that was often inaccessible to civilians.<sup>11</sup> That was not true of the radio culture imposed upon them, much of it known also to civilians, although veterans of the Second World War did play a role in the production of some special troop broadcasts offered by the CBC.

This facet of wartime communication never received the same level of attention paid to the ways censorship and propaganda impeded the transmission of news from the front during the world wars. Historian Jeffrey Keshen argued that shielding civilians from the horrors of the Great War produced a lasting rift with returning veterans, while Timothy Balzer’s recent history of army public relations during the Second World War suggested that attempts to manage the flow of news from the frontlines produced a “form of propaganda.”<sup>12</sup> What little exists on the subject of Canadian radio

<sup>9</sup> For example, Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 175; Ted Barris, *Deadlock in Korea: Canadians at War, 1950-1953* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2010), 205; John Gardam, *Korean Volunteer: An Oral History From Those Who Were There* (Burnstown, ON: General Store Publishing House, 1994), 152; Brent Byron Watson, *Far Eastern Tour: The Canadian Infantry in Korea 1950-1953* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 140-141; Les Peate, *The War That Wasn’t: Canadians in Korea* (Ottawa: Esprit de Corps, 2005), 110 and 115; Edward C. Meyers, *Thunder in the Morning Calm: The Royal Canadian Navy in Korea, 1950-1955* (St. Catharines, ON: Vanwell, 1992), 74 and 137.

<sup>10</sup> Sean M. Maloney, *War Without Battles: Canada’s NATO Brigade in Germany, 1951-1993* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997), 49-50, 95 and 145.

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey A. Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship during Canada’s Great War* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996), 133 and 153; Tim Cook, *Shock Troops: Canadians Fighting The Great War, 1917-1918*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 179 and 187.

<sup>12</sup> Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 201 and 215; Timothy Balzer, *The Information Front: The Canadian Army and News Management during the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 4 and 7.

in Korea stressed other limiting influences, like the hazardous roads travelled by journalists, carrying cumbersome recording equipment to the frontlines to interview soldiers and capture the sounds of artillery fire. The resulting tapes made a long journey by road and air, if an amenable pilot could be found, to Canada, by way of the censors in Tokyo. Reports were several days old when finally broadcast by the CBC.<sup>13</sup> There was also a presumption of conflict in the literature on newsgathering in peacetime, best expressed by political scientist Denis Stairs. Reflecting on fraught media-military relations in the 1990s, when journalists reported on misconduct within the ranks of the Canadian Forces, he concluded that disagreements over the release of sensitive information were inevitable because these institutions had fundamentally different obligations to the public. In his words, “this clash of cultures is *always* there.”<sup>14</sup> It was less evident in works that examined Cold War uses for shortwave radio, capable of transmitting propaganda across state borders, considered vital to the promotion of ideologies and the expression of national identities, if not also a means by which to engage in psychological warfare.<sup>15</sup>

Nor was it a defining characteristic of media-military engagement for the purpose of troop broadcasting, which reversed the flow of information, bringing news of home and familiar entertainment from civilian radio networks to what, essentially, was a displaced domestic audience. Histories of British and American attempts to meet the needs of these listeners, which sometimes included Canadians, tend

<sup>13</sup> Mallory Schwartz, “A ‘Golden Age’ of CBC Television News for the Military, 1952–1956,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (December, 2013), 498; John Melady, *Korea: Canada’s Forgotten War*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011), 263. For a comparable examination of British and American newsgathering, see, Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The war correspondent as hero and myth-maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 365–390.

<sup>14</sup> Denis Stairs, “The media and the military in Canada: Reflections on a time of troubles,” *International Journal* 53, no. 3 (Summer, 1998), 545.

<sup>15</sup> Philo C. Wasburn, *Broadcasting Propaganda: International Radio Broadcasting and the Construction of Political Reality* (London: Praeger, 1992), 24 and 33; James L. Hall, *Radio Canada International: Voice of a Middle Power* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997), viii.

to neglect the Korean experience.<sup>16</sup> A more popular line of inquiry is the unexpected influence on civilians in places like St. John's, Newfoundland, where the Voice of the United States, established by the AFRS in 1943, generated an affinity for American popular culture, according to Jeff A. Webb.<sup>17</sup> R. Stephen Craig reached a similar conclusion after studying the "American cultural legacy" in postwar Germany. Though civilians preferred it to the Voice of America because its message was subtler, the American Forces Network was no less propagandistic, Craig argued, since it advertised the United States as "an upbeat land of plenty where capitalism and hard work paid off for everyone..."<sup>18</sup> It follows that even the shallowest examples of North American popular culture might be considered a reflection, if not an endorsement, of the values within the societies it served. For example, the Christianity expressed in church services broadcast by the CBC, the capitalism of commercial sponsorship, and the libertarian commitment to the freedom of speech on public affairs programs evoked defining ideals of the West, then engaged in a Cold War with the authoritarian, communist East. What propaganda lurked beneath the surface of programs produced to please a civilian audience belonged to culture wars waged in living rooms and not to the bloody battles playing out in Korea. After all, the Korean conflict was not a total war that mobilised all sectors of the home front. It did not even dominate the headlines heard on the radio after 1952, which rarely mentioned the Canadians holding the Jamestown Line.<sup>19</sup> And yet radio programming, whether created originally for

<sup>16</sup> For example, Samuel Brylawski, "Armed Forces Radio Service: The Invisible Highway Abroad," *The Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*, 37, no. 3-4 (Summer/Fall, 1980), 441-457; Alan Grace, *The Link With Home: Sixty Years of Forces Radio* (Berkshire: A British Forces Broadcasting Service production for the Services Sound and Vision Corporation, 2003); Doreen Taylor, *A Microphone and a Frequency: Forty Years of Forces Broadcasting* (London: Heinemann, 1983); Patrick Morley, *"This is the American Forces Network": The Anglo-American Battle of the Air Waves in World War II* (London: Praeger, 2001), 17 and 106.

<sup>17</sup> Jeff A. Webb, "VOUS—Voice of the United States: The Armed Forces Radio Service in Newfoundland," *Journal of Radio Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004), 87-99. For a similar argument, see, David Culbert, "Erik Barnouw's War: an interview concerning the Armed Forces Radio Services' Education Unit, 1944-1945," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002), 475-490.

<sup>18</sup> R. Stephen Craig, "American Forces Network in the Cold War: Military Broadcasting in Postwar Germany," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 32, no. 3 (Summer, 1988), 317.

<sup>19</sup> Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 193.



William J. Herbert during the Korean War.  
[CBC Still Photo Collection, A037553]

civilian audiences or the armed forces, served the interests of military leadership by disseminating a Canadian perspective on national and international affairs that informed service personnel while boosting morale, if only by easing monotony and the sense of alienation from life at home.

What did this mean in practice? What were the stated objectives for troop broadcasting, as expressed by broadcasters, bureaucrats, and servicemen? What did it take to bring Canadian radio to the armed forces in the Far East? Why and how did the CBC get involved? This article traces the changing rationale, resources, and relationships on which the CBC relied as it helped to build a radio service for the armed forces, starting with the earliest efforts in 1951, shortly after the first Canadians arrived, until 1956, when few still remained in Korea.

William J. Herbert knew war. Released from the army to become a war correspondent at the CBC, he risked his life to cover the fighting in Normandy and Italy during the Second World War.<sup>20</sup> His reports on the fighting in Korea earned him praise from Brigadier Frank J.

<sup>20</sup> Powley, *Broadcast from the Front*, 38, 89, and 103.



Fleury, head of the Canadian Military Mission in the Far East, who was reportedly glad of any effort to “keep news of our boys on CBC networks...” however, Herbert was doing more than just reporting on the war, as the CBC learned from Captain D.L. Burleson, a public relations officer stationed at United Nations Command in Tokyo. Herbert was also providing expert help to eliminate some of the “amateurish wrinkles” that plagued a new fifteen-minute radio bulletin for Commonwealth troops, produced at Radio Tokyo. It could be heard on the US AFRS in January 1951.<sup>21</sup> These arrangements reflected the broader picture of the war: when 2PPCLI reached the frontlines in February, it did so as part of the 27th British Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, under the command of the US Eighth Army. Americans also took charge of the Commonwealth Division, formed later that year. According to historian David J. Bercuson, this reorganisation was, in part, an effort to secure access to “the essentials of civilized life,” like letters from home.<sup>22</sup> Although it was a pragmatic response to the circumstances of war, such cooperation in broadcasting was commonplace for Commonwealth nations. As Simon J. Potter explained, people in the industry moved easily between Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand for training and employment in the 1940s and 1950s, exchanging ideas about broadcasting while strengthening imperial bonds.<sup>23</sup> This relationship found further expression in troop broadcasting. In 1951, the British Forces Network started relaying programs, some produced especially for troops stationed in Europe, which the CBC conveyed across the Atlantic by shortwave.<sup>24</sup> The Far East was more of a challenge. “Shortwave beams from the Sackville transmitters must pass very near the North Magnetic Pole to reach Korea,” explained the *CBC Times*, “and are therefore subject to severe interference.”<sup>25</sup> Charles R. Delafield, supervisor of the International Service, considered alternative means of getting the news to Canadian ships in Korean waters, like giving written transcripts of daily newscasts, as broadcast in Vancouver,

<sup>21</sup> Captain D.L. Burleson to E.L. Bushnell, 12 January 1951, vol. 2, file “Korean War, CBC News, 1950–52,” A.E. Powley fonds (MG 30 E 333), LAC.

<sup>22</sup> Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 5, 77 and 128–129.

<sup>23</sup> Simon J. Potter, “Strengthening the Bonds of the Commonwealth: the Imperial Relations Trust and Australian, New Zealand and Canadian broadcasting personnel in Britain, 1946–1952,” *Media History* 11, no. 3 (2005), 193–205.

<sup>24</sup> CBC, *Annual Report 1951/52*, 38.

<sup>25</sup> “For the Soldiers Overseas,” *CBC Times* 4, no. 40 (20–26 April 1952), 3.



CBC correspondent Bernard Kaplan with men of Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians). ["Did I Say That?" *CBC Times* 5, no. 6 (24-30 August 1952), 5]

to navy public relations officers, who could then share them with the fleet by means of wireless teletype.<sup>26</sup> However, agreements with Canadian Press, still a major source of news, seemed to only permit use of the agency's reports on broadcasts.<sup>27</sup> A shortwave relay to the Australian Broadcasting Commission eliminated the need for any such arrangement. "Probably, the greatest want of service personnel serving in Korea is for news of home and Canada in general," an officer aboard HMCS *Haida* in 1953 explained. "All letters and newspapers received are read avidly. Receiving the news as it happens via your broadcast helps to fill this want."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> C.R. Delafield to K.P. Caple, "Daily News for R.C.N. Destroyers," 29 February 1952, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 1), "Northern & Armed Forces Services, Programme Production—Armed Forces, Liaison with Armed Forces—General," records of the CBC, RG 41, LAC.

<sup>27</sup> Kenneth Caple to Chief News Editor, "Daily News for R.C.N. Destroyers," 4 March 1952, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>28</sup> Lieutenant H.T. Cocks to CBC, 14 April 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 2), RG 41, LAC.

Few people at the CBC were as well qualified to be producer of troop broadcasts as was Len Cosh. A veteran of the Second World War, he worked for a soft drink company after leaving the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), but never lost his fascination with radio. He had a “ham” station in Halifax, Nova Scotia, when he joined the CBC in 1945, giving it up only upon relocation to Sydney. His transfer to the International Service three years later marked his return to his birthplace of Montreal. He was thirty-two years old when he assumed responsibility for troop broadcasts in October 1952.<sup>29</sup> Not long after his appointment, he telephoned recently-returned servicemen to ask for their opinions of the radio services in Korea. Using small, battery-powered radios, they could pick up the occasional hockey game on Crown Radio, operated by the British Commonwealth (or Britcom) Broadcasting Unit, based in Kure, Japan. Poor reception, inconvenient broadcast hours and insufficient sports coverage were some of the complaints emphasised in Cosh’s conversation with Captain R.J. Morast:

*Cosh*            We can’t transmit from Canada direct with good results. You must have heard the daily Korean broadcast relayed through Australia.

*Morast*        We got that in the rear areas but in the forward areas it was very hard. The boys would be up most of the night on patrol etc., and would not get up until 4 pm in the afternoon.

*Cosh*            You would say that you had some touch with Canada.

*Morast*        Yes in the Japan News we always had two columns

*Cosh*            That was written news.

*Morast*        Yes, and we had the radio through Kure, but as I said we had little time in the forward areas. We got some Canadian news through Australian stations and some through Kure. As far as sports

<sup>29</sup> Documents from file “Cosh, Len,” biography files, CBC Reference Library (CBCRL), Toronto: “New Montreal Correspondent,” February 1953, 13; “Biographical Notes—Len Cosh,” 9 August 1948.

are concerned, we kept in the picture a little bit. The boys were most anxious to hear sports especially the Patricias.<sup>30</sup>

To aid note-taking by the Japan News, which published the CBC bulletin in a newspaper for Commonwealth troops, Cosh asked announcers to “read at a slower pace.”<sup>31</sup> By January 1953, the men of 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade Group (25 CIB) were also tuning their radios to Station Nomad, run by the US AFPS in Korea. It offered commercial-free recordings from the CBC and the daily newscast relayed from Melbourne. Lieutenant-Colonel H. Stewart, director of public relations for the army, based at National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa, believed that these developments finally resolved “the problem of getting CBC programs to the troops.” It certainly offered better reception than Crown Radio, which Cosh continued to furnish with programs, even offering access to the CBC’s transcription library, a source for sixteen-inch discs with music and other essentials for the production of original programs.<sup>32</sup> It was not enough to satisfy Lieutenant Colin G. Hann of Britcom, who grew increasingly frustrated with technical faults in the recording of “mediocre” programs from the CBC.<sup>33</sup>

The navy also needed entertainment. In 1953, Harry R. Low facilitated the transportation of CBC tapes from Montreal to the Canadian destroyers in the Far East.<sup>34</sup> Liaising with the CBC for the purpose of procuring recordings was within his remit as the first director of the Bureau of Current Affairs, established at NDHQ in 1951. Its courses and publications for servicemen were “a type of weapon training” that sought to counter “subversive communist propaganda” with what it considered to be more reputable information about Canada, its allies, and its enemies. “The surest defence ... is

<sup>30</sup> Len Cosh to Harry Low, 10 December 1952, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>31</sup> Len Cosh to Charles Gursky, “Canadian Forces News Bulletin—Korea,” 23 June 1953, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), “Northern & Armed Forces Services, Programme Production—Armed Forces, News Broadcasts,” RG 41, LAC.

<sup>32</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: Lt.-Col. Stewart to Harry Low, 27 January 1953; Len Cosh to Lieutenant Colin Hann, 5 February 1953. Also, Stewart, *From Coast to Coast*, 117.

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant Colin Hann to Len Cosh, 17 February 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>34</sup> Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, “Distribution of Tapes: Naval Destroyers—Far East,” 11 April 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 2), RG 41, LAC.

the truth,” argued the navy’s official magazine, *The Crowsnest*.<sup>35</sup> This was a goal shared by the International Service. Its shortwave transmissions, characterised by the *CBC Times* as “exposing the fabrications of Red propaganda and vigorously expounding the Western viewpoint,” were reaching listeners in the Soviet Union by 1951.<sup>36</sup> Though less obviously propagandistic, programs sent by shortwave or recorded on tapes for the armed forces were also vehicles for Canadian perspectives on domestic and international affairs, though some in the navy preferred popular diversions from the United States. Before the aircraft carrier HMCS *Magnificent* left Canada in August 1953, Instructor Lieutenant Kenneth E. Vavasour asked Cosh for recordings of American favourites, like *Our Miss Brooks*, to play over loud speakers for the crew.<sup>37</sup> He had more than a passing interest in radio, having served for a time as president of the VE1HO Amateur Radio Club at HMCS *Stadacona*, a shore base that housed training facilities in Halifax. Evidence of “radio proficiency and a sincere interest in ‘ham’ radio” were the qualifications for membership, Vavasour told naval personnel in 1950.<sup>38</sup> Cosh agreed to his request for recordings, asking only that the navy provide blank tapes, since he was running out.<sup>39</sup>

Cosh was starting to see the need for a central library of recordings to supplement the books and magazines already available to the navy.<sup>40</sup> The idea of “endless stockpiling” worried Delafield, since the International Service assumed responsibility for the recording of tapes handed over to the navy in Montreal. He wrote to Maritime regional representative, W.E.S. (Ted) Briggs, to find out if the staff in Halifax would take responsibility of the proposed “tape pool” on the east coast.<sup>41</sup> Briggs had unique insight into the needs of the navy. He was

<sup>35</sup> “BCA: A New Training Scheme,” *The Crowsnest* 3, no. 12 (October, 1951), 4.

<sup>36</sup> “Our Country’s Voice to the World—Eight Years Old This Week,” *CBC Times* 5, no. 32 (22–28 February 1953), 2; *CBC, Annual Report 1951/52*, 42.

<sup>37</sup> Carl MacCaull to Len Cosh, “H.M.C.S. Magnificent,” 20 July 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 2), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in “Royal Canadian Experimental Radio Station VE1HO, H.M.C. Communication School, Halifax, Nova Scotia,” *The Crowsnest* 2, no. 10 (August, 1950), 30.

<sup>39</sup> Len Cosh to Carl MacCaull, “H.M.C.S. Magnificent,” 28 July 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 2), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>40</sup> Carl MacCaull to Len Cosh, “H.M.C.S. Magnificent,” 29 July 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 2), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>41</sup> C.R. Delafield to W.E.S. Briggs, “Taped Program Service – Canadian Navy,” 3 August 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.



Air Transport Command with recordings for the Far East. ["A Merry Christmas!" *CBC Times 5*, no. 23 (21-27 December 1952), 3]

a thirty-three-year-old announcer at the CBC when the Second World War began. The former reservist left the Corporation to serve with distinction in the navy, receiving the Distinguished Service Cross before he reached the rank of captain. He reportedly ran a "tight ship" when he returned to the CBC.<sup>42</sup> After consulting with the navy, Briggs rejected the tape library proposal since most ships, including those near Korea, could receive broadcast transmissions and few had the necessary equipment to play tapes or discs, a deficiency that defeated earlier efforts. Not until they reached land and found an amenable radio station were Canadians, sailing off the Korean coast in 1952, able to hear the voices of loved ones, tape-recorded by the CBC.<sup>43</sup> Lieutenant Vavasour advocated within the navy for the expansion of this improvised service, despite its flaws.<sup>44</sup> For instance, only two of a dozen blank tapes sent to the CBC returned with recordings of

<sup>42</sup> Bob Blackburn, "Capt. Briggs fades from CBC bridge," *The Telegram* (Toronto), 27 January 1967; "Briggs Retires From CBC," *The Ottawa Journal*, 27 January 1967.

<sup>43</sup> W.E.S. Briggs to Assistant Director General, International Service, "Taped Program Service—Canadian Navy," 18 August 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>44</sup> Instructor Lieutenant Kenneth E. Vavasour to Len Cosh, 4 August 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.

radio programs for the crew of the *Magnificent* as they sailed for Belfast.<sup>45</sup> The next time the *Magnificent* left Canadian waters, it did so with a small tape library of its own. Cosh arranged the recording of programs shortly before heading to Halifax, where he planned to discuss entertainment provisions with the navy.<sup>46</sup> “What I propose,” he told Harry Low,

is that each ship turn over a number of their tapes to a common pool at the shore base. The tapes could then be handed over to the CBC in Halifax where they would be loaded and then returned to the pool. The various ships would then be able to draw on the pool, just as they would draw books from a library. When the tapes have made the rounds, they would be returned to the CBC for re-recording.<sup>47</sup>

His visit to Halifax would settle the details.

Those able to receive shortwave transmissions, which Radio Australia recorded and then relayed to Korea, had greater access to news. In 1953, there were daily bulletins and bilingual coverage of special events like the federal election. The concerns of “smaller communities” even received weekly attention from Don Fairbairn, a former RCAF public relations officer, who was an “unofficial correspondent” for the CBC during the Second World War.<sup>48</sup> Still, Cosh was unsatisfied. “We want material prepared and presented in a way that the men feel it’s especially for them,” he insisted.<sup>49</sup> But gathering news for the armed forces in the regions, for example, seemed impractical to colleagues, though Bill Herbert was keen to

<sup>45</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC: Instructor Lieutenant Kenneth E. Vavasour to Len Cosh, 3 September 1953; Instructor Lieutenant Kenneth E. Vavasour to Len Cosh, 4 August 1953.

<sup>46</sup> Documents from various parts of vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC: Carl MacCaull to Len Cosh, “H.M.C.S. ‘Magnificent,’” 31 December 1953, (pt. 3); Len Cosh to Carl MacCaull, “H.M.C.S. ‘Magnificent,’” 8 January 1954, (pt. 4).

<sup>47</sup> Len Cosh to Harry R. Low, “Re: Tape Service RCN—Far East,” 11 January 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>48</sup> Cable, General Manager of the CBC to Charles Moses, 31 July 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 2), RG 41, LAC; Powley, *Broadcast from the Front*, 89–90. Also, documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: F.P. Johnson to Len Cosh, “Rebroadcast of Korean News by Radio Australia,” 28 September 1953; Len Cosh to A.W. Powley, “Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas,” 12 August 1953.

<sup>49</sup> Cosh to Powley, “Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas,” 12 August 1953.

cover events on the west coast of Canada.<sup>50</sup> A few International Service representatives were also willing. One even offered to read aloud excerpts from local newspapers.<sup>51</sup> The need was particularly acute for the Royal 22e Regiment, which had few other ties with home.<sup>52</sup> There were roughly 1,600 French-speakers in Korea by November 1953 when the CBC—at the urging of the Department of National Defence—finally started to record thirty minutes of French-language news and sports highlights on discs conveyed by airmail each week.<sup>53</sup>

Hockey, football, classical music, plays, and variety programs, in French and English, were also on the army's wish list.<sup>54</sup> To better serve Canadian listeners, Colonel H. Stewart and Cosh started talking in October about moving a surplus transmitter, which the military no longer needed in northern Canada, to Korea so that 25 CIB could have a radio station of its own.<sup>55</sup> The war was over and Canadians were starting to make their way home, so why expand the radio service?<sup>56</sup> "Now that actual fighting has ceased in Korea," explained Lieutenant H.W. Norris, a public relations officer with the army, "soldiers have more free time for recreation." A Canadian radio station would boost morale through entertainment, if only by alleviating "the feeling of being an isolated group." Not all of its programs would be Canadian. The US AFRS would also provide familiar commercial shows, like comedy from Bob Hope, a favourite back home. "These would be

<sup>50</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: A.E. Powley to Len Cosh, "Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas," 18 August 1953; Len Cosh to International Service Representatives at CBC Halifax, CBC Toronto, CBC Winnipeg and CBC Vancouver, "Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas," 28 August 1953; Mary MacKenzie to Len Cosh, "Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas," 1 September 1953.

<sup>51</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: Don MacDonald to Len Cosh, "Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas," 8 September 1953; Dick Halhed to Len Cosh, "Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas," 10 September 1953; Gordon L. Jones to Len Cosh, "Canadian News—Armed Forces Overseas," 23 September 1953.

<sup>52</sup> Watson, *Far Eastern Tour*, 153.

<sup>53</sup> Len Cosh to C.R. Delafield and Marcel Ouimet, "News and Sports News—French," 6 November 1953, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>54</sup> Documents from various parts of vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10, RG 41, LAC: Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, "News Broadcast Reception, Far East," 21 September 1953, (pt. 3); Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, 13 August 1953, (pt. 3); Len Cosh to Jules Pelletier, 21 October 1953, (pt. 3); Harry R. Low to C.R. Delafield, 6 May 1953, (pt. 2).

<sup>55</sup> Len Cosh to Harry Low, 8 October 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>56</sup> Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 221.



essential in providing a Canadian atmosphere to the schedule,” Norris argued, recognizing the importance of American content to Canadian radio culture.<sup>57</sup> He did not believe that the Commonwealth connection was as strong. Occupied mainly with Australian and British output, he concluded, “Crown Radio is of little entertainment or education value to Canadians in Korea.” More significant than alienation due to cultural difference was its failure to serve French-Canadian audiences and its privileging of Australian newscasts, afforded an hour of airtime each day.<sup>58</sup>

However, Norris identified “atmospheric interference” as the main factor hindering the CBC’s deliverance of just fifteen minutes of news by shortwave. He considered foreign alternatives, though none offered the much-needed “home news.” Transmissions from other sources were not consistently clear, anyways. Another option was to receive reports by teletype from a wire service, which announcers could read live. It was clear that a Canadian radio station hoping to rectify years of neglect needed more than just a large music library.<sup>59</sup> However, getting discs to Crown Radio was an arduous exercise, requiring air travel from Montreal to Tokyo, followed by road transport to Kure, before continuing on to Korea.<sup>60</sup> “There have been times ... when Crown Radio has been without any Canadian recordings at all due to the difficulties in shipping,” Norris complained.<sup>61</sup> The inauguration of the new Canadian station, called Radio Maple Leaf, in December 1953 did not simplify the arrangements, since recordings still had to make their way to Kure for Crown Radio’s Canadian listeners. However, they now went to Korea first.<sup>62</sup> The military assumed that the CBC would fill any gaps in the station’s growing library with its own popular productions, like *The Happy Gang* and *Don Messer and His Islanders*, though Cosh denied requests for music that could be

<sup>57</sup> Report by Lieutenant H.W. Norris, “Radio Requirements for 25 CIB in Korea,” 22 October 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>58</sup> Report by Lieutenant H.W. Norris, “Report on Existing Radio Facilities in Korea, Crown Radio,” 16 November 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.; Norris, “Radio Requirements for 25 CIB in Korea.”

<sup>60</sup> Len Cosh to C.R. Delafield, “CBC Recordings,” 10 November 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>61</sup> Norris, “Report on Existing Radio Facilities in Korea, Crown Radio.”

<sup>62</sup> Len Cosh to C.R. Delafield, “CBC Recordings,” 10 November 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC.



Canadians at the Maple Leaf Club listen to radio broadcasts from Kure, Japan. ["Our Country's Voice to the World—Eight Years Old This Week," *CBC Times* 5, no. 32 (22-28 February 1953), 2]

purchased elsewhere.<sup>63</sup> There were limits to the dependence the CBC was willing to accept, even though it took pride in its relationship with the military. For example, the *CBC Times* promoted the work of its Canadian Forces Broadcast Service, as it was sometimes known, boasting that recordings arrived in the Far East within forty-eight hours of the Grey Cup final.<sup>64</sup> It later sent films of televised football games.<sup>65</sup>

William H. Dumsday realised that Radio Maple Leaf also needed a reliable newscast. He was a veteran of the Second World War and

<sup>63</sup> Documents from various parts of vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10, RG 41, LAC: J. Baxter for John Wallis to Harry R. Low, 2 December 1953, (pt. 3); Len Cosh to Harry Low, 10 December 1953, (pt. 3); Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, 16 December 1953, (pt. 3); Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, "CBC Recordings for Far East," 8 January 1954, (pt. 4).

<sup>64</sup> "CBC Exports," *CBC Times* 6, no. 22 (13-19 December 1953), 9. The CBC used several different names for what was previously "Troop Broadcasts." See, C.R. Delafield to Harry Low, 15 January 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>65</sup> Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, 20 April 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

a former journalist, who worked at several different newspapers, including the *Winnipeg Free Press*, before joining Canadian Press in 1935. He was the agency's Ontario news editor when he quit in 1949 to become the director of public relations for the Department of National Defence.<sup>66</sup> He raised the problem of news with the International Service in November 1953. Often the only means of receiving Canadian headlines, the Japan News sometimes failed to transcribe daily shortwave transmissions, made incomprehensible by poor reception. Even when they could be understood, the newscasts suffered from a shortage of sports coverage.<sup>67</sup> In an attempt to overcome these limitations, Dumsday asked British United Press (BUP) to use its wireless, radio-teletype link with Tokyo to send a transcript of the daily bulletin, which could be read live on Radio Maple Leaf and printed by the Japan News. When first approached, BUP insisted that the bulletin could only include domestic news from the CBC, which "in no way could be considered propaganda," conditions Dumsday accepted.<sup>68</sup> Prohibiting material from other wire services, essential for the radio news, was problematic for the CBC.<sup>69</sup> With Dumsday as mediator, they reached a compromise: BUP would function as a passive conduit for news it could not recycle, while an eight-hour embargo ensured that Canadian Press would not be scooped. The CBC was responsible for its enforcement.<sup>70</sup> The first bulletins sent in December disappointed servicemen, who expected more sports. Dumsday explained, "what the boys want to know is who was named Canada's woman athlete of the year, who was named the new coach of the Calgary Stampeders, what team was selected

<sup>66</sup> Canadian Press, "Newsman first to file Dionne Quint's story," *The Globe and Mail*, 24 June 1968.

<sup>67</sup> William H. Dumsday to Paul Barette, 3 November 1953, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>68</sup> William H. Dumsday to Len Cosh, 3 December 1953, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 3), RG 41, LAC; teletype message, Len Cosh to H.G. Walker, 7 December 1953, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>69</sup> Teletype message, W.H. Hogg to Len Cosh, 9 December 1953, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>70</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: teletype message, W.H. Hogg to Len Cosh, H.G. Walker, M. Ouimet and C. Delafield, 10 December 1953; teletype message, C.R. Delafield to W.H. Hogg, 14 December 1953. Also, documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: teletype message, W.H. Hogg to Len Cosh, C.R. Delafield and P. Barette, 22 December 1953; William H. Dumsday to William Hogg, 23 December 1953.

as the ‘come-back’ team of the year...” He was within his rights to complain, since the army was paying for this service.<sup>71</sup>

Lieutenant Peter R. Churchill was the station manager at Radio Maple Leaf. In his first report, he boasted that it was “the top show piece of 25 Brigade.” Praising the facilities, he told Cosh,

All visitors of any import end up here to have a look around. The station itself is like something out of a book of modern design. I hope in the near future to be able to send you some color photos of it. We have really caught on with the Canadian troops and wherever you go throughout the brigade you will find nearly every radio on the 1090 spot. It is a little too early yet to have a comprehensive listener report but the odd whisper seeps in that units of other countries find it worth listening to.<sup>72</sup>

French-speakers from other countries were particularly grateful, which Low considered “real encouragement.”<sup>73</sup> The army asked for more hockey, drama, and music to enhance this service. It also sought and received religious material, like the Protestant *Church of the Air* and Roman Catholic hymns in the French language.<sup>74</sup> Struggling to accommodate these demands, Cosh suggested ways to maximise his limited resources, like recording only one hockey game a week.<sup>75</sup> Radio Maple Leaf simplified the choice, insisting that there was “no French requirement.”<sup>76</sup> Cosh also urged the prompt return of tapes, preferred to single-use discs, so they could be filled with new material. This was a problem with the navy. “It would seem that we were feeding the tape into a bottomless pit,” he complained of the

<sup>71</sup> William H. Dumsday to Harry Low, 8 January 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>72</sup> Lieutenant Peter R. Churchill to Len Cosh, 17 January 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>73</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Len Cosh to Harry Low, 23 February 1954; Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, 24 February 1954.

<sup>74</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Churchill to Len Cosh, 17 January 1954; Major G.E. Stebbens for Colonel John Wallis to Harry Low, 22 Feb. 1954; Len Cosh to Harry Low, 3 March 1954; Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, “Re: Tape Recordings of Easter Music for Radio Maple Leaf,” 24 March 1954.

<sup>75</sup> Len Cosh to Harry Low, 26 January 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>76</sup> Radio Maple Leaf to CANARMY Ottawa, 26 February 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

service for ships in the Far East.<sup>77</sup> And they were not the only ones relying on the CBC: HMCS *Ontario* received a weekly supply of tapes from CBC Vancouver as it sailed to Australian waters.<sup>78</sup> Cosh met with colleagues at CBC Halifax in January 1954, to discuss how they would sustain this service.<sup>79</sup> In the meantime, Harry Low asked that destroyers in the Far East return used tapes.<sup>80</sup> They were trying to stretch limited resources, not deny the armed forces radio services. Cosh even solicited the help of public relations officers to create a weekly newscast that would share stories about military life.<sup>81</sup> This suggested awareness that this was an audience like no other, with stories to tell and community bonds to build.

Just consider the lengths to which the CBC went to disseminate domestic news in Korea. The International Service needed a five-minute summary of the latest sports headlines to follow the daily news bulletin, sent to Korea by shortwave and teletype several hours before any news agency would normally have anything ready. Rather than assign its staff to the task, the International Service paid BUP for a sportscast. It was a disappointing experiment. Tardy deliveries left announcers without sports headlines to read during shortwave transmission. Those that arrived on time failed to meet the minimum word count requirements. Rather than enforce compliance with the existing agreement, Harry Low proposed an ambitious expansion of the sportscast, asking BUP to provide 1,000 words each day when it could not be relied upon for the timely conveyance of 700 words of

<sup>77</sup> Cosh to Low, 26 January 1954. See also, Len Cosh to Harry Low, 1 March 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>78</sup> W.J. Herbert to Andrew Cowan, "Troop Broadcast Tapes—for H.M.C.S. Ontario," 17 January 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>79</sup> Len Cosh to Harry Low, "Re: Tape Service RCN-Far East," 11 January 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>80</sup> Commander J.H.G. Bovey to Harry Low, "Return of CBC Tapes," 18 February 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>81</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Len Cosh to William Dumsday, 11 February 1954; Len Cosh to William Dumsday, 18 February 1954; William H. Dumsday to D.N. Inf, DPR (Army), DPR (RCAF), DRB PRO, "Re: CBC troops broadcast," 22 February 1954.

copy.<sup>82</sup> Servicemen were “hungry for sport,” Dumsday advised BUP.<sup>83</sup> Gillis Purcell was also unhappy to learn that BUP was adding the byline, “From the United Press,” to these newscasts, which contained copy from Canadian Press, where he was general manager.<sup>84</sup> “No matter how soft my answer,” ruminated William H. Hogg, chief news editor at the CBC, “I still expect to get a blast of wrath.”<sup>85</sup> The content was not faultless, either. Radio Maple Leaf reported that the newscast contained “much drivel” and “too much unimportant sport,” leaving little room for coveted hockey results.<sup>86</sup> “I think that with half a dozen different people handling the broadcasts before they reach Tokyo, that it was just a matter of smoothing things out,” reasoned Dennis Landry, assuring Dumsday that BUP would resolve these problems.<sup>87</sup> However, Hogg and Delafield believed Canadian Press could offer a better service at a lower cost, if not for free, which would leave BUP responsible only for teletype transmission. After tests in April, they formalised the arrangement in May.<sup>88</sup> It was not a perfect solution. Technical failures and mistakes sometimes deprived the armed forces of headlines. Perhaps the most frustrating was when

<sup>82</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: Len Cosh to C.R. Delafield, “Sports News—British United Press,” 5 February 1954; C.E. Stiles to C.R. Delafield, “News Service (Sports for Canadian Armed Forces Transmissions),” 5 February 1954; C.R. Delafield to C.E. Stiles, “News Service (Sports for Canadian Armed Forces Transmissions),” 23 February 1954; C.R. Delafield to W.H. Hogg, “News for Troops in Korea,” 24 February 1954. Also, Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, 2 March 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>83</sup> William H. Dumsday to Phil Curran, 4 March 1954, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>84</sup> W.H. Hogg to Gillis Purcell, 26 February 1954, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>85</sup> W.H. Hogg to C.R. Delafield, “News for Troops in Korea,” 26 February 1954, vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>86</sup> Radio Maple Leaf to CANARMY Ottawa, 26 February 1954.

<sup>87</sup> Dennis Landry to William Dumsday, 8 March 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>88</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: C.R. Delafield to W.H. Hogg, “Troop Broadcasts—BUP, CP,” 11 March 1954; W.H. Hogg to C.R. Delafield, “Troop Broadcasts—BUP, CP,” 4 March 1954; W.H. Hogg to C.R. Delafield, “Sports for Troops—CP, BUP,” 18 March 1954; C.R. Delafield to W.H. Hogg, “Sports News for the Troops,” 6 April 1954; C.R. Delafield to H. Bramah, “BUP Sports News,” 6 April 1954; C.R. Delafield to H. Bramah, “BUP Sports Cast,” 23 April 1954; C.R. Delafield to Phil Curran, 23 April 1954.

the army couriers failed to convey the printed bulletin, once delivered in error to the *Montreal Star* instead of the BUP office.<sup>89</sup>

As it made these arrangements in April 1954, the CBC stopped sending recordings to ships in the Korean theatre. With 600 tapes still unreturned seven months later, they should not have been entirely without entertainment.<sup>90</sup> But instead of forming the basis of a tape library on the west coast, most ended up in storage at Canadian Supply Headquarters in Japan.<sup>91</sup> The army did not suffer any such deprivation. With nearly thirty hours of airtime to fill each week, Lieutenant Churchill always seemed to need more music and news for Radio Maple Leaf.<sup>92</sup> Then there was Britcom, which continued to serve Canadians with help from the CBC. For example, *Britcom Hit Parade*, which showcased popular music from the Commonwealth, relied on the CBC for a weekly listing of Canadian favourites. As might be expected from a society drenched in American popular culture, singers like Frank Sinatra and Rosemary Clooney featured prominently.<sup>93</sup> Along with music and sports coverage created especially for them, there were also messages from home on the radio.<sup>94</sup> Canadian women wrote to Radio Maple Leaf with requests for “musical dedications,” hoping that they would be heard by friends and family serving in Korea.<sup>95</sup> So

<sup>89</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: Len Cosh to Paul Barette, “B.U.P. Complaint—Forces’ News,” 10 June 1954; Paul Barette to Dennis Landry, 11 June 1954; Willie Chevalier to C.R. Delafield, 9 June 1954; William H. Dumsday to C.R. Delafield, 6 July 1954; Paul Barette to Dennis Landry, 7 July 1954; C.R. Delafield to William H. Dumsday, 12 July 1954; Paul Barette to Dennis Landry, 25 August 1954; Len Cosh to Paul Barette, “Forces Bulletin and Sportscast,” 26 August 1954.

<sup>90</sup> Teletype message, Len Cosh to Andrew Cowan, 22 November 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>91</sup> W.J. Herbert to Andrew Cowan, “Troop Broadcasts—H.M.C.S. ‘Ontario,’” 23 December 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>92</sup> Harry R. Low to Len Cosh, 2 June 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>93</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Captain Colin Hann to Len Cosh, 13 April 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Captain Colin Hann, 25 May 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Captain Colin Hann, 28 May 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Captain Colin Hann, 25 June 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Captain Colin Hann, 5 July 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Captain Colin Hann, 23 July 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Capt. Colin Hann, 13 August 1954; Lucy Lavigne to Captain Colin Hann, 27 August 1954.

<sup>94</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Andrew Cowan to Len Cosh, “Recordings Supplied to Forces Broadcasting Stations,” 2 September 1954; Len Cosh to J.C. McCabe, “British Empire Games—Canadian Forces,” 1 June 1954.

<sup>95</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Joan R. Roach to Jack Craine, 15 July 1954; Teletype message, Andrew Cowan to Len Cosh, 24 August 1954.

did the parents of American servicemen.<sup>96</sup> Even ships on the Atlantic coast enjoyed a more privileged access to entertainment than did their counterparts on the Pacific. There were plans to establish a lending library, filled with tape recordings, at HMCS *Stadacona*. The CBC promised to add ten hours of comedy, music and drama to its collections each week.<sup>97</sup> It was a relatively simple task, since there was no editing involved in recording for the navy. (Only those programs broadcast by radio stations in distant lands, like Radio Maple Leaf, had to be commercial-free).<sup>98</sup> And the navy paid shipping costs. Without a comparable service for the west coast, the CBC had to improvise provisions for HMCS *Ontario*, when it returned to the South Pacific in 1955.<sup>99</sup> Andrew Cowan oversaw the arrangements. The forty-three-year-old was a former war correspondent and CBC European representative, based in London, before he became supervisor of troop broadcasts in 1954.<sup>100</sup> “One difficulty,” he complained, “is that the shows that we would put on tape to give them a back-log on the first part of the cruise would be shows which had already been broadcast on CBC and which ... the men may have already heard.”<sup>101</sup> Many were Christmas specials, which would have seemed particularly outdated in January or February. But without even a music library onboard, the crew could not be fussy.<sup>102</sup> The CBC managed to secure hundreds of hours of entertainment, none of which the navy saved for future

<sup>96</sup> Andrew Cowan to Lieutenant Peter R. Churchill, 2 September 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>97</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC: Rear Admiral R.E.S. Bidwell to Len Cosh, 12 March 1954; Len Cosh to Rear Admiral R.E.S. Bidwell, 22 March 1954; Len Cosh to Carl MacCaul, “Tape Library—H.M.C.S. *Stadacona*,” 28 June 1954; S.R. Kennedy to Len Cosh, “Tape Library—H.M.C.S. *Stadacona*,” 23 July 1954.

<sup>98</sup> Len Cosh to S.R. Kennedy, “Tape Library—HMCS *Stadacona*,” 3 August 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 4), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>99</sup> Andrew Cowan to Len Cosh, 2 December 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>100</sup> CBC Information Services, “Biography: Andrew G. Cowan,” July 1959, file “Cowan, Andrew,” biography files, CBCRL.

<sup>101</sup> Andrew Cowan to William Herbert, “H.M.C.S. *Ontario* Tape Broadcasts,” 2 December 1954, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>102</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC: teletype message, Len Cosh to Andrew Cowan, 16 December 1954; Andrew Cowan to William Herbert, “H.M.C.S. *Ontario* Tape Broadcasts,” 20 December 1954; W.J. Herbert to Andrew Cowan, “H.M.C.S. ‘*Ontario*’ Tape Broadcasts,” 6 December 1954.





Staff of Radio Maple Leaf, Korea, 2 October 1954. (Front row, L-R): Sergeant Earle Prendergast, Rifleman Gordon Courtenay. (Rear row, L-R): Signalman Jim Robinson, Sergeant Bob McKenzie, Lieutenant Ted Follows, Corporal Slim Rawlings. [© Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada (2014). Source: Library and Archives Canada/Department of National Defence fonds/PA-128825]

use: the *Ontario* required an entirely new set of recordings when it sailed in 1956.<sup>103</sup>

There were roughly 2,000 Canadians soldiers and airmen still serving in Korea by December 1954, down from over 7,000 two years earlier.<sup>104</sup> Assuming that those who remained would soon return to Canada, Andrew Cowan turned his attention to Canadians with the International Commissions for Supervision and Control, established in 1954 to oversee the withdrawal of France from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. He considered asking the Australian Broadcasting Commission to relay transmissions from Sackville to Singapore, where there was a British radio station. Nothing came of plans to either supplement or replace comparable shortwave services for the troops in

<sup>103</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC: Doug Nixon to Len Cosh, "Armed Forces Recordings," 12 May 1955; Andrew Cowan to Lt.-Cmdr. R.M. Greene, 25 January 1956.

<sup>104</sup> Order of the House of Commons No. 52, 28 February 1955, vol. 4, file "Defence: Army, 1952-56," Gordon Churchill fonds, MG 32 B-9, LAC.

Korea which, as it turned out, also reached Canadians in Indochina.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, radio services declined as the number of Canadians in Korea fell. “When we reduced forces last fall, Maple Leaf was moved to a new site and re-opened as Radio Commonwealth,” Sergeant J.C. Rawlings reported to Cosh in April 1955.<sup>106</sup> Servicemen from Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand collaborated to run the new station, which used tapes from the CBC.<sup>107</sup> These modest efforts soon ended. Following instructions from Harry Low, the CBC stopped its shipments of recordings to the Far East and ceased shortwave transmissions for Korea in September. This freed the CBC to make changes to the Radio Australia shortwave relay that would improve reception in Indochina.<sup>108</sup> The Australian Broadcasting Commission questioned the need.<sup>109</sup> Even if the number somehow grew to 150, there would still be too few Canadians to justify daily shortwave transmissions to Indochina, so they were discontinued.<sup>110</sup>

The CBC had long been serving the Canadian forces that arrived in the Far East to fight in the Korean War. Bureaucrats, broadcasters, and servicemen enlisted radio for wartime service for different reasons, whether to alleviate boredom to provide them with a Canadian perspective on domestic and international affairs, or simply to offer a wholesome alternative to booze and brothels. However, all considered

<sup>105</sup> Documents from vol. 753, file NF 3-4-3 (pt. 1), RG 41, LAC: C.R. Delafield to Charles Moses, 4 February 1955; Charles Moses to C.R. Delafield, 27 January 1955; Andrew Cowan to C.R. Delafield, “News Broadcasting to Indochina,” 25 March 1955. Also, teletype message, C.R. Delafield to Andrew Cowan, 13 April 1955, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC; David J. Bercuson and J.L. Granatstein, *Dictionary of Canadian Military History* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), s.v. “International Commissions for Supervision and Control.”

<sup>106</sup> Sergeant J.C. Rawlings to Len Cosh, 6 April 1955, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>107</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC: Sergeant J.C. Rawlings to Len Cosh, 6 April 1955; Jules Pelletier to Major E.G. Stebbens, “Re: CBC Tape Recordings for Far East,” 27 May 1955.

<sup>108</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC: Harry R. Low to Andrew Cowan, 19 August 1955; Andrew Cowan to C.R. Delafield, “Shortwave Broadcasts to Canadian Armed Forces in Korea,” 23 August 1955; C.R. Delafield to Andrew Cowan, “Troop Broadcasts,” 26 August 1955; J. Murillo Laporte to Maritime Regional Engineer and Program Clearance, Montreal, “Canadian Forces Broadcasts—Korea,” 26 August 1955.

<sup>109</sup> Cable, Charles Moses to C.R. Delafield, 1 September 1955, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>110</sup> Documents from vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC: cable, C.R. Delafield to Charles Moses, 20 September 1955; C.R. Delafield to Charles Moses, 20 September 1955; C.R. Delafield to Andrew Cowan, “Troop Broadcasts,” 4 October 1955.

radio STET a means of evoking a sense of home on foreign soil or seas. The International Service and what became known as the Canadian Forces Broadcast Service of the CBC, based in Montreal, supplied hundreds of hours of radio content to libraries for naval personnel or, more directly, by means of teletype circuits, shortwave transmissions, and in airmail parcels filled with tapes and discs destined for Korea. Few of the newscasts, music recordings, sporting events, religious services, dramas, or comedies—all carefully chosen to meet popular tastes, spiritual needs, and language requirements—would have reached Canadian listeners without some intervention by news agencies, Commonwealth broadcasters, and radio stations that served allied troops, which relayed, published, or broadcast content from the CBC. Not all of it was Canadian in origin: there was a strong affinity for popular culture from the United States, often named in requests from Canadian servicemen. Listeners were not all Canadian, either. Radio Maple Leaf, for example, boasted a multinational following. After it closed, a Commonwealth radio station was, again, one of the only outlets for Canadian content in Korea by 1956.<sup>111</sup> Much of the audience disappeared over the course of 1957 as the few remaining Canadian troops left Korea.<sup>112</sup>



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Mallory Schwartz** received her PhD in history from the University of Ottawa.

<sup>111</sup> Andrew Cowan to Len Cosh, "Tape-recorded programmes for Korea," 31 January 1956, vol. 754, file NF 3-4-10 (pt. 5), RG 41, LAC.

<sup>112</sup> Bercuson, *Blood on the Hills*, 221.

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