

Canadian Involvement in the Spanish Civil War as a Case Study for Understanding Foreign Fighter Flow

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Canadian Involvement in the Spanish Civil War as a Case Study for Understanding Foreign Fighter Flow, by Major Brendan Insley, Canadian Army, 57 pages.

The phenomenon of foreign fighter flow continues to negatively impact Canadian interests by complicating inter-state relations and eroding public trust in the government's ability to protect its citizens. This study analyzes the case of Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War; specifically, what motivated them to participate in the conflict, what characteristics they had in common, what the public perception was, and the efficacy of measures taken by the Canadian government before, during, and after their participation. Contrasting this case study against more modern examples of Canadian foreign fighter flow allows military planners to understand them within their historical context and aid in the development of future strategies to combat this problem.

Contents

Acknowledgments	v
Acronyms	vi
Illustrations	vii
Tables	vii
Introduction	1
The Spanish Civil War	4
Characteristics & Motivations	6
Public Perception and Government Response.....	16
Post-War Reintegration	27
Parallel to Foreign Fighter Flow in Vietnam.....	32
Characteristics & Motivations	33
Public Perception and Government Response.....	36
Parallel to Foreign Fighter Flow in the Former Yugoslavia.....	39
Characteristics & Motivations	40
Public Perception and Government Response.....	43
Conclusion.....	44
Bibliography	49

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Acronyms

AP	Associated Press
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
CAF	Canadian Armed Forces
CPR	Canadian Pacific Steamships
Comintern	Communist International
CPC	Communist Party of Canada
HVO	Hrvatsko vijeće obrane / Croatian Defence Council
ICC	International Control Commission
IRA	Irish Republican Army
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
Mac-Paps	Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion
PCE	Partido Comunista de España / Communist Party of Spain
POUM	Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista / The Workers' Party of Marxist Unification
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
RCL	Royal Canadian Legion
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RGASPI	Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History
WW1	First World War
WW2	Second World War
YCL	Young Communist League

Illustrations

Figure 1. Known Marital Status of Canadian Volunteers.....	7
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Tables

Table 1. Known Ethnicities of Canadian Volunteers.....	10
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Introduction

There were guys who were running away from their wives. There were guys who were sick of living on relief. There were guys who were hotshot Communist Party members. That's what the International Brigades were. It wasn't a bunch of guys all shouting, "Hooray for Stalin!" and "Over the top!" That's ridiculous. It was just you and me and him and fifteen other guys with all sorts of reasons for joining an army.

—Hugh Garner, interview with Mac Reynolds, c. 1965.

The Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights defines a foreign fighter as “an individual who leaves his or her country of origin or habitual residence to join a non-State armed group in an armed conflict abroad and who is primarily motivated by ideology, religion, and/or kinship.”¹ Although financial incentives cannot be entirely discounted, foreign fighters can be distinguished from mercenaries or private military contractors by virtue of their primary motivation.² The phenomenon of foreign fighters is not new; however, recent developments in Iraq and Syria have once again raised the consciousness of Canadians to this threat. Canadians have participated or directly supported virtually every major global conflict since confederation, however the scale of the support has varied.

The Canadian government estimates the number of Canadians who are active with terrorist organizations is approximately one hundred and ninety, mostly in Iraq and Syria. Sixty fighters are known to have returned to Canada from this conflict, with even more expected following the routing of ISIS. On 12 February 2019, Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale stated Canada was unwilling to put diplomatic officers at risk and disinterested in facilitating the return of those suspected of supporting terror abroad.³ Nonetheless, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has taken measures in anticipation of this eventuality.

¹ Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, *Academy Briefing No. 7: Foreign Fighters Under International Law* (Geneva: Universite de Geneve, 2014), 6.

² United Nations, Security Council Resolution S/2015/358: Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on Foreign Terrorist Fighters (New York: UN, 2015), 12.

³ Peter Zimonjic, Vassy Kapelos, and Brennan MacDonald, “Goodale says he won't put Canadians 'at risk' to bring ISIS fighters home for trial,” *CTV News*, February 12, 2019, accessed March 20, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/goodale-fighters-irak-syria-risky-1.5007250>.

Unfortunately, not all recent efforts to combat foreign fighters have been successful. Not only has it resulted in the detention and torture by foreign states of a number of Canadians who were subsequently cleared of any wrongdoing, but also embarrassing apologies and enormous financial payouts to those who did participate in terror activities and whose rights were nonetheless violated.⁴ Many others have simply returned to Canada, further eroding public confidence in the government's ability to respond to this nebulous threat. The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has a broad role in the government's efforts to combat the problem. The CAF must leverage its unique capabilities including intelligence collection, analysis, surveillance, reconnaissance, and communications in support of international and domestic law enforcement efforts. However, for commanders and staffs to apply intuition and creative imagination in the development of strategies, they must first understand the environment in which they are operating. One key input to forming this understanding is the consideration of relevant histories associated with the problem.⁵

A study of Canadian volunteers involved in the Spanish Civil War presents a particularly useful example from which to identify characteristics common to foreign fighters and lessons learned from the government's response to them. Canada contributed a greater proportion of its population to the conflict than any country aside from France. Of the 1,546 Canadians that fought, an estimated 400-721 lost their lives. This figure represents more than in any conflict other than the two world wars. Canadians fought overwhelmingly on the side of the Republican cause with most participants recruited by the Communist Party of Canada (CPC). Many government leaders labelled those that returned as premature anti-fascists and treated them with

⁴ Government of Canada, Access to Information (ATI) request A-2017- 00154 (Ottawa: Public Safety, 2017), 539.

⁵ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), xiii, IV-11; Canadian Armed Forces, *B-GJ-005-005 Canadian Forces Joint Publication 5.0* (Ottawa: Strategic Joint Staff, 2008), 1-1.

mistrust and hostility. In some cases, the government forbade them from enlisting to fight in the Second World War (WW2).

Although the last remaining member of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion passed away in 2013, national archives in Canada, Spain, and Russia possess a large body of primary source material concerning Canadian involvement in the conflict. However, the sacrifice of Canadians who fought against fascism on the Republican side of the Spanish Civil War is all but forgotten by the Canadian public. The names of these volunteers do not appear in the national Books of Remembrance, and the Canadian War Museum makes scarce mention of them in any of its public exhibits. Practitioners of operational art can apply lessons related to the participation of Canadians in the Spanish Civil War to the modern foreign fighter phenomenon by understanding their motivations, characteristics, public perception, and actions taken by the government.

The study omits conflicts occurring prior to Canadian confederation in 1867 and specifically excludes one of the largest examples of Canadian participation in a foreign conflict, the US Civil War. Although participation by Canadians was widespread in both Union and Confederate forces, the absence of a competing Canadian identity and realization that the conflict was raging across the border made participation more a matter of self-preservation than an example of foreign fighter flow. The analysis of the conduct of Canadian foreign fighters in Spain, something that while overlooked by a majority of Canadians, has been sufficiently detailed in battlefield histories by authors like Victor Howard, Mark Zuehlke, William Beeching, and Michael Petrou. However, a detailed analysis of their characteristics and motivations have not been adequately contrasted against other historical examples to identify relevant trends.⁶ Rather than pass judgement on the motives of past or present examples of foreign fighter flow, this study

⁶ Victor Howard, and J. M. Reynolds, *MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion: The Canadian Contingent in the Spanish Civil War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986); Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Mississauga, Ontario: John Wiley & Sons, 1996); William C. Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain 1936-1939* (Winnipeg: Hignell Printing, 1989); Michael Petrou, *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

seeks to understand them in order to aid future efforts to prevent or respond to similar phenomena should it prove necessary or desirable. To this end, the term volunteer will be used in place of other more emotive language to allow readers to more dispassionately approach the material based on the facts and accounts presented.

The Spanish Civil War

Widely seen as a precursor to WW2, the Spanish Civil War took place between 1936 and 1939. The Republican forces fought the conflict in response to a military coup led by General Francisco Franco. His Nationalist forces included most of the Spanish military leadership, allied with Fascist Germany and Italy, with the support of the Roman Catholic Church. The Republican forces were those who remained loyal to the legally elected government. The left leaning coalition of the Popular front won an overwhelming number of seats in the then unicameral *Córtes Generales* during the 1936 election, albeit with only a narrow lead in the popular vote. The Soviet sponsored Communist International (Comintern) helped raise a paramilitary force of 40,000 volunteers drawn from fifty-two countries. From September 1936 until the Spanish President disbanded them on 23 September 1938, the International Brigades bolstered government forces in the fight against the Nationalists. Comintern authorities grouped most Canadians who participated in this conflict into the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion (Mac-Paps), so named for William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau, who led the 1837 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada.⁷

There were no obvious reasons for Canadians to concern themselves with a faraway conflict in a country smaller than Manitoba. Spain had no political and few economic ties with Canada. Unlike many other European countries, there was no large Spanish diaspora. Canadians of the 1930s did not succumb to the siren song of fascism in the numbers that some European populations did; however, there was not a complete absence of support either. The socio-political

⁷ Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 55.

climate was also not particularly favorable for certain opponents of fascism such as the nascent Communist movement which the federal and provincial governments actively targeted with restrictive policies discussed in a later section.

Although the Canadian government sought to cultivate a fear of Communism, it is only with the benefit of hindsight that the anti-democratic nature of world Communism is so apparent. The 1917 Russian Revolution actually increased democratic participation by eliminating the Tsarist autocracy. Similarly, Communists in Spain gained influence in Republican Spain through democratic practices. Once in power, the Republican government turned increasingly anti-democratic and targeted conservatives through exclusion and violence. This contributed to the military led coup against the democratically elected left-wing government. Although there was a growing mistrust of Communism amongst certain segments of Canadian society, the threat of Fascism appeared even more abhorrent to many Canadians.

A reason the reported number of Canadians involved in the Spanish Civil War varies so widely is the difficulty in ascertaining the citizenship of individuals during a period of mass migration. For example, Stewart O'Neal Homer was born in Ireland in 1900, and served with the British Army during the First World War (WW1) before immigrating to Canada and becoming active in the Communist and labor movements. However, before serving alongside the Mac-Paps in Spain, Canada expelled him to the United Kingdom. The question of where he would be repatriated was not answered as he was killed in action at Brunete on 6 July 1937.⁸ Additionally, although the preponderance of Canadian volunteers served with the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, many others served in other formations of the international brigades that corresponded with their native languages or ethnicities, the anti-Stalin Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), or in civilian hospitals.

⁸ Virtual Research Environment of Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War, "Volunteers - Stewart O'Neal Homer," accessed March 16, 2019, <http://spanishcivilwar.ca/volunteers/stewart-oneal-homer>.

Characteristics & Motivations

The average age of Canadians who volunteered for the Spanish Civil War was considerably older than other international volunteers. One investigation of 366 Canadian volunteers revealed that 61.5% of this group were over thirty compared to a US study which revealed only 28.9% of volunteers as over thirty. In their exploration of the Canadian contingent, Victor Howard and Mac Reynolds attribute this phenomena both to measures taken to dissuade fighting age men from participating and the preponderance of landed immigrants or naturalized citizens who had come to Canada in search of a better life amidst the chaos of WW1.⁹ Of the 611 Canadian volunteers for whom marital status is known, 492 (81%) were single, 103 (17%) were married, 3 (0.5%) were divorced, 6 (1%) were widowed, and 1 (0.2%) was in a common law marriage. Fifty-Seven (9%) of those surveyed had children.¹⁰

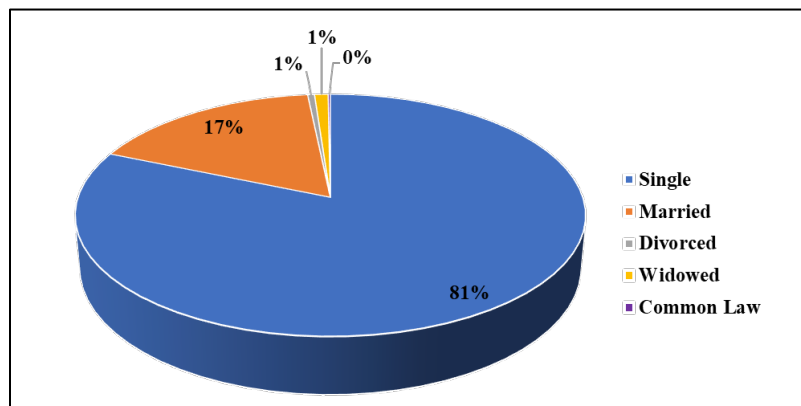


Figure 1. Known Marital Status of Canadian Volunteers, created by author.

At least seven Canadian women are known to have served in Spain in various support roles. Jean Watts initially went to Spain as a journalist for *The Daily Clarion*, a newspaper reflecting the viewpoints of the CPC. She later enrolled with the Mac-Paps and was employed as an ambulance driver. Ethel Magid, Florence Pike, Toula Ioannu, Elene Nikephorou, Maria Nikolao, and Ruth Epstein served as nurses and ambulance attendants alongside at least four male

⁹ Howard and Reynolds, *MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion*, 31.

¹⁰ Petrou, *Renegades*, 13-14.

medical doctors; Dr. Henry Norman Bethune, Dr. Aaron Magid (husband of Ethel Magid), Dr. Harry Ostry, and Dr. Harold Gislason. Additionally, Eugene Fogarty claimed to hold a degree in medicine from McGill University; however, his drug addiction, trafficking, fraud, and dangerous practices resulted in his removal from the International Brigades. A subsequent search revealed no records of Fogarty ever attending McGill.¹¹

Although 105 Canadian volunteers admitted to being arrested or detained by police prior to volunteering for Spain, there is no evidence service in Spain uniquely attracted serious criminals. Instead, this is as much a reflection of Canada's treatment of the unemployed and those engaged in the labor movement, with the majority of offences including "vagrancy, illegal assembly, soliciting funds without a permit, or hitching a ride on railway wagons."¹² One major source of these offenses was the On to Ottawa Trek protest of 1935. The trek galvanized the frustrations of thousands of unemployed men, most of whom were toiling in federal relief camps in remote parts of Western Canada. The Department of National Defence established these camps at the direction of the Bennet government and eventually more than 170,000 men passed through them.¹³ The camps intended to isolate and subdue a segment of the population that the government had identified as problematic, but instead they proved to be fertile grounds for recruiting volunteers for the Spanish Civil War. In a 2002 interview with Michael Petrou, the last surviving member of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion estimated as many as 20% of Canadian volunteers were members of the Relief Camp Workers' Union.¹⁴ In many ways, the conflict in Spain was a surrogate for the discord in Canada that had already erupted in violence between police and labor unions. However, that is not to suggest all volunteers were unemployed; many

¹¹ Petrou, *Renegades*, 55; Ronald Liversedge, *Mac-Pap: Memoir of a Canadian in the Spanish Civil War* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2013), 192-193.

¹² Ibid., 17-18.

¹³ Ibid., 30.

¹⁴ Petrou, *Renegades*, 18.

gave up jobs as miners, carpenters, and other tradesmen in order to pay their own way to Spain.

Employment data is available for 815 Canadian volunteers, and although many listed more than one profession, the majority of responses (84%) listed manual and skilled labor, 12% identified as professionals or students, and only 3.5% as craftsmen.¹⁵ Additionally, at least 215 Canadian volunteers had previous military experience of some kind, usually in the Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Air Force, and Reserve. Others had gained experience with the British and American armed forces, and still others with other European armies or revolutionary groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA). Eighty-Nine Canadian volunteers are known to have claimed experience from WW1 and frequently these personnel were immediately elevated to positions of leadership or specialty within the International Brigades. Given the aforementioned demographics of Canadian volunteers and the legacy of armed conflict spanning the preceding decades, these statistics are not surprising. In fact, on average, Canadian volunteers had comparatively less military experience than their counterparts from European countries where they still widely practiced conscription.¹⁶

A review of Canadian volunteers' hometowns overwhelming suggests they came from urban backgrounds. This is interesting because during the 1930s, 46% percent of Canadians still resided in rural areas. Certainly, some of this reflects a tendency for people to list the nearest city to their actual hometown; however, it may have also been related to increasing urbanization and in particular, the trend for immigrants to settle in urban areas.¹⁷ Canadian volunteers included a higher percentage of immigrants than did any other international contribution. Of the 1,384 volunteers for whom ethnicity is known, only approximately 21% identified as strictly Canadian or French-Canadian. Amongst a population which claimed 22.2% of census respondents as

¹⁵ Michael Petrou. *Renegades*, 14-16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 190-241; Barry Edmonston, "Canada's immigration trends and patterns," *Canadian Studies in Population* 43, no. 1-2 (2016), 78-116, accessed March 21, 2019, <https://journals.library.ualberta.ca/csp/index.php/csp/article/view/25395/20365>.

foreign born, this represented a disproportionately high number.¹⁸ The known backgrounds of those groups comprising greater than 1% of the volunteers were as follows:¹⁹

Ethnicity	%
Canadian	17%
Ukrainian-Canadian	17%
Hungarian-Canadian	10%
Finnish-Canadian	8%
English-Canadian	7%
Scottish-Canadian	5%
Croatian-Canadian	5%
Polish-Canadian	4%
French-Canadian	4%
Irish-Canadian	3%
Slovak-Canadian	2.5%
Czech-Canadian	1.6%
Bulgarian-Canadian	1.4%
Macedonian-Canadian	1.4%
American-Canadian	1.3%
German-Canadian	1.2%

Table 1. Known Ethnicities of Canadian Volunteers. Created by author.

Even amongst those who were born in Canada, not all volunteers would have identified their ethnicity with a country that had only gained its full legislative independence with the enactment of the Statute of Westminster in 1931.²⁰ Fifty-two Canadian volunteers of varying countries of origin identified as having Jewish heritage or faith, a rate twice as high as their representation relative to the Canadian population.²¹ Germany's persecution of Jews galvanized many from this community into taking direct action to confront fascism. The high percentage of volunteers claiming non-French ancestry reinforces that the majority of volunteers were either English speakers or allophones, a person whose first language is neither English nor French.

This research only identified three volunteers of Spanish origin, and as previously

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, "Number and proportion of foreign-born population in Canada 1871 to 2036," 2011, accessed March 16, 2019, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/dai/btd/othervisuals/other006>.

¹⁹ Petrou. *Renegades*, 22.

²⁰ Parliament of the United Kingdom, "Statute of Westminster, 1931," accessed March 16, 2019, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1931/4/pdfs/ukpga_19310004_en.pdf.

²¹ Statistics Canada, "Canadian Statistics in 1936," Government of Canada, August 26, 2009, accessed March 13, 2019, https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb07/acyb07_0009-eng.htm.

mentioned, there were no obvious historical ties between the two countries. However, the ethnic, religious, and cultural similarity of the two countries motivated some volunteers. Both were agrarian countries and Spain's location and European culture help explain the disproportionate response of Canadians compared to earlier ideological struggles in Manchuria and Abyssinia.²² Bryce Coleman of Vancouver, who died at Brunete, related an occasion where Canadian veterans offered to help Spanish farmers with the harvest and noted the similarities between the farmers of Canada and Spain. He lamented the impact of "debt, drought, and rent," but presented an optimistic assessment of the Communist leaning Spanish government's ability to deal with these challenges.²³

Understanding why the majority of Canadian volunteers called themselves Mac-Paps helps to better understand why Canadians fought in the Spanish Civil War. In his introduction to the 1937 pamphlet describing the emergent history of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, war correspondent Ted Allan describes the discussion concerning the naming of the third battalion of the XV International Brigade, sometimes referred to in American literature as the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. In it, Allan states the brigade leadership fiercely debated many names before one of the Canadians beckoned for silence and said, "If we know why we are here, if we know that fighting for democracy, really fighting for democracy, is only carrying on the traditions of our country and our forefathers, then I say we must name our battalion after those two men who fought to bring democracy to Canada, Louis Alexandre Papineau and William Lyon Mackenzie."²⁴ This ended the debate on the topic and from that day forward, the majority of Canadian volunteers identified as Mac-Paps.

In his biography written immediately following the war, Jules Paivio unequivocally

²² Petrou, *Renegades*, 23.

²³ Bryce Coleman, *Hello Canada!: Canada's Mackenzie Papineau Battalion, 1837-1937* (Toronto: Friends of the Mackenzie-Battalion, 1937), 15; Petrou, *Renegades*, 196.

²⁴ Ted Allan, *Canada's Mackenzie Papineau Battalion, 1837-1937* (Toronto: Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, 1937), 5.

attributes the commitment of Canadian volunteers to fighting for “an ideal of democracy, men who hated fascism enough to die on the battlefield fighting it.”²⁵ He also states the volunteers were motivated not by “mere fanaticism but knowledge and unshaken certainty in the truth and right” of the ideals of democracy and the freedom of mankind.²⁶ Recent immigrants to Canada were often motivated to volunteer for Spain owing to firsthand experience with the rising scourge of fascism in Europe. One such person was Charlie Sands, a German-Canadian who joined the Communist cause to oppose the rise of National Socialism in Germany before emigrating to Vancouver. He organized the landmark On to Ottawa trek before volunteering for Spain and making the ultimate sacrifice in Belchite on 6 September 1937.²⁷

Although it became somewhat less fashionable in the post-war period to admit it, it is clear many of the Canadian volunteers had connections to the labor and Communist movements at home. Some reports suggest as many as 76% of the Canadians in Spain had some kind of affiliation with the CPC or the Young Communist League (YCL). Some post war attempts at preserving data for a historical work on the brigades relied upon responses to a voluntary questionnaire. Of the 398 respondents, greater than 60% admitted membership in the CPC, YCL, or both. However, these responses are less reliable than other statistics owing to the contemporary anti-Communist sentiments and the fact that they reflect only about 25% of the total number of Canadian volunteers. What is more interesting is almost 40% of the respondents who acknowledged an association with the Communist movement did not join the movement until after the start of the conflict. It is therefore unclear how many of these volunteers may have joined the Communist movement because of its anti-fascist stance and established support

²⁵ Jules Paivio, “Account of his service in Spain,” September 26, 1939, File 9, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Collection, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Howard and Reynolds, *MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion*, x.

networks, rather than the communist ideology itself.²⁸

Recently it has become commonplace to equate Communism with undemocratic principles; however, for Canadian volunteers there was little in the way of evidence of this in 1936. The only successful Communist revolution occurred in Russia, replacing an autocratic Tsar who would have appeared more foreign to Canadians. Furthermore, the global depression created some support for a system claiming to better represent the working class. During the mid-1930s, plummeting demand for Canadian exports caused the unemployment rate to reach a high of 30%. The social injustices this exposed, and the resultant hopelessness are oft quoted reasons for participation in the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War.²⁹

In 1938 even William Arthur Kardash, one of the more famous post-war Canadian Communists considered himself an “eagle of democracy.”³⁰ He described his rural Saskatchewan upbringing, early involvement in the wheat pool co-operative, and his desire to “save progress and democracy from ruin.”³¹ He equated the proud legacy of Canadians from the Great War with the contemporary requirement to safeguard “the democratic traditions, ideals of peace, progress, and democracy.”³²

Kardash’s memoir also dispels the notion of the Communist movement in Spain as a homogenous one, describing the infighting between the Partido Comunista de España (PCE), Trotskyists, and socialists.³³ The most prominent Canadian accused for what was known as Trotskyism was William Krehm, whose opposition to Stalin and association with the Canadian

²⁸ Petrou, *Renegades*, 24; Ian Parenteau, “The Anti-Fascism of the Canadian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: 1969-1939” (master’s thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1999).

²⁹ Bill Waiser, *All Hell Can’t Stop Us: The On-to-Ottawa-Trek and Regina Riot* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2003), 25-26.

³⁰ William Kardash, *Timely Topics: I Fought for Canada in Spain* (Toronto: New Era Publishers, 1938), 5.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 7.

League for a Revolutionary Workers' Party led him to employment as a translator with the POUM. Krehm was in Barcelona when the rift within anti-fascist forces turned into a mini civil war. Eventually the anarchists abandoned the POUM leaving it isolated and vulnerable to assault by the rival PCE. The PCE detained Krehm before expelling him; sparing him a lengthy incarceration and torture because of his foreign status. Volunteer Robert Hamilton described the ideological discord between the socialists and communist members of the International Brigades. This included the treatment of members of the Socialist Party of America, nicknamed the Eugene Debs, who after paying their own way across the Atlantic, were snubbed and accused of having a bad influence on other volunteers. In a letter describing his prisoner of war experience, Robert Dickie a Scottish-Canadian volunteer appealed for anti-fascist forces "to unite forces and work quickly for their freedom" and "build a stronger Anti-Fascist Front."³⁴

The case of Dr. Norman Bethune presents some unique insights into the relationship between the cause of Communism and Canadian volunteers. Bethune volunteered as a stretcher bearer in WW1 where he was wounded by shrapnel. He returned to Toronto where he completed his medical degree in 1916. Bethune gradually became disillusioned with social inequality and was an early proponent of socialized medicine, travelling to the Soviet Union to study the system in person. Bethune began increasingly identifying with the Communist Party and formally joined in 1935. When war broke out in Spain, he travelled to the conflict with the backing of the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, a Communist front providing financial and medical support to the Republican cause. Bethune established a blood transfusion service that collected and shuttled blood from population centers to the front lines. After a falling out with Spanish

³⁴ Recruiting for the Spanish Army Canada", December 15, 1970, CSIS files 95-A-00088, RG146, LAC; Petrou, *Renegades*, 152-154; Robert Hamilton, "Robert Hamilton's account of his service during the Spanish Civil War," File 7, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Collection, LAC; Robert Dickie, "Account of San Pedro de Cardena," April 8, 1939, Box 6, MS Collection 165, Spanish Civil War Collection, Thomas Fisher Library, accessed March 16, 2019, <http://spanishcivilwar.ca/islandora/object/islandora%3Aae3690f2-668d-4e42-a1dd-e9bd171a511b#page/6/mode/2up>.

authorities he returned to Canada to fundraise for the cause before turning his focus on the struggle between China and Japan. Norman Bethune died in 1939 and to this day, China commemorates him with poems, monuments, and awards.³⁵

In his unpublished memoir, Robert Hamilton described the complicated relationship between volunteers and the Communist ideology and the surprise of International Brigade administrators at discovering the relatively small percentage of Canadian volunteers with ties to the Communist party. He also describes the distinction in the treatment of those volunteers who were considered “politically developed” and those who were not. During reception and staging in Paris, the party expected those who did not meet this threshold to attend twice daily meetings indoctrinating them on the reason they were fighting in Spain. Certainly many of the Canadians who recruited for and fought in the Spanish Civil War were ardent Communists. However, even the Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, an organization with known ties to the Communist Party, recognized the importance of distinguishing the fight in Spain from the spread of Communism. The 1937 manifesto of the Winnipeg chapter of this organization is careful to paint the conflict as one between democracy and fascism rather than a communist revolution.³⁶

Hamilton describes the challenges city bred volunteers experienced in the hazardous crossing of the Pyrenees mountains, often wearing only oxfords and light coats; and the frequency in which men died during the trek. Hamilton also described the dire health of some volunteers and questions how they were allowed to join without a medical inspection. He described men suffering from blindness, paralysis, and ulcers. His memoir also discusses

³⁵ Anne Ruisi, “China remembers Canadian doctor Norman Bethune,” *China Daily*, September 8, 2015, accessed March 31, 2019, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2015-09/08/content_21816146.htm; Marjorie McEnaney, “The early years of Norman Bethune,” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, September 13, 1964, accessed March 31, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/norman-bethune-the-early-years>; Norman Bethune, “Wounds,” Marxist-Leninist, February 14, 2009, accessed March 31, 2019, <https://marxistleninist.wordpress.com/2009/02/14/norman-bethune-wounds/>.

³⁶ Hamilton, “Robert Hamilton’s Account of his service;” Peter N. Carroll, *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 61; “Winnipeg Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy Manifesto,” 1937, P7145/3, William Kardash Fonds, Archives of Manitoba.

mistreatment by superiors like Major Pierre Lamont, a French-Canadian whose linguist ability and experience in the RCMP elevated him to the rank of General and Commandante of the Guardia Nacional. Hamilton condemned his motivations as being purely self-serving, accusing him of stealing personal effects from volunteers, and deserting with 45,000 pesetas when faced with the prospect of serving ninety days at the front. Hamilton relates the execution of Lamont by machine gun along with three Finnish-Canadians who he claims did nothing more wrong than voice their opposition to Communism.³⁷

Hamilton was suspicious of the order to surrender passports and openly questioned how many of the “lost” passports were later used by the Communist party to land in Canada. He discussed encountering twenty-eight British members of the International Brigade who were imprisoned for refusing to fight after being left in the front for eighty-six days without relief. These soldiers agreed to return to their company after two weeks of rest. Meticulous records maintained by Soviet commissars support similar occurrences of defections among Canadian volunteers. To address this lack of political conviction, formal “political discussions” continued at the rate of once per day during the soldier’s period of training which took place at Castillo de Figueras. Hamilton also specifically notes that he, nor any other volunteer with him, swore any allegiance to Spain. Although these are only anecdotal examples, they serve to highlight an ideological desire to combat fascism rather than a dedication to the Communist manifesto motivated many Canadians.³⁸

The memoir of Jules Paivio from Sudbury, Ontario focused not only on the hardships endured by Canadian volunteers but also placed a heavy emphasis on the social component of his experience. It described volunteers billeted in Spanish households, acquiring girlfriends, and

³⁷ Hamilton, “Robert Hamilton’s account of his service;” Virtual Research Environment of Canadian Cultural History About the Spanish Civil War, “Volunteers - Pierre Lamont,” accessed April 11, 2019, <https://spanishcivilwar.ca/volunteers/pierre-lamont>.

³⁸ “Reports of Canadian defections translated from Spanish,” 1938, MG10-K2 545/3/435, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Collection, LAC; Hamilton, “Robert Hamilton’s account of his service.”

absorbing Spanish culture in the cafés of Albacete. This discusses another common rationale for the participation of young men in foreign conflicts, a sense of adventurism. Paivio's use of the word adventure throughout his memoir supports adventurism as a common motivation for volunteers. At the conclusion of his memoir, Jules Paivio recommits himself to Spanish democracy, world peace, and the struggle against fascism. He goes so far as to say he is ready to fight for these principles again in the future, which he did by volunteering for service in WW2. The heavy casualties suffered and endured by the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion indicate a commitment beyond simple adventure seeking, and demonstrates in some cases a sense of adventurism is not necessarily incompatible with more altruistic motivations.³⁹

Of the nine types of insurgents identified in his analysis of insurgency and terrorism, Bard O'Neill identifies Franco's Nationalists as a classic example of what he coins as a traditionalist insurgency. The goals of this type of insurgency center on restoring a political system from the recent or distant past and the Nationalists were no different. Conversely, Canadian volunteers in the International Brigades possessed primarily anarchist, egalitarian, and preservationist ideologies.⁴⁰

Public Perception and Government Response

Cultural, socio-economic, religious, and geographic considerations affected the public perception of the Spanish Civil War. Media coverage reflected these differences and complicated the government response. In particular, the conflict exposed the traditional Francophone-Anglophone divide. Sir Jean Lomer Gouin, a former Premier and Lieutenant Governor of Quebec summed up the thoughts of French Canadians by saying they "are in favour of isolation in one form or another, from this it follows that we do not intend to have Canada become one of the

³⁹ Paivio, "Account of his service in Spain;" *Toronto Star*, Obituary for Jules Paivio, September 13, 2013.

⁴⁰ Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2005), 19-28.

policemen of the world.”⁴¹ The murders of Spanish clergy and nationalization of Roman Catholic Church property by the Republican government in Spain invoked the wrath of the Papacy. This was felt in the deeply Catholic population of Quebec where Maurice Duplessis achieved a major victory in the 1936 Quebec provincial elections riding an anti-Communist platform with the support of Cardinal Jean-Marie-Rodrigue Villeneuve. This was even more clearly espoused in a speech by Monsignor Antoniutti, the papal delegate to Canada, during which he called Franco and his forces “an army of heroes, justly called Christ’s militia.”⁴²

Once in power, Duplessis’s Union Nationale government passed the “Loi protégeant la province contre la propagande communiste,” commonly referred to as “La Loi du cadenas” or the Padlock Law. The law made it “illegal for any person, who possesses or occupies a house within the Province, to use it or allow any person to make use of it to propagate communism or bolshevism by any means whatsoever.”⁴³ The Padlock Law was a major impediment to the recruitment and organization of those who supported the communist leaning Republican cause in Spain and was not struck down by the Canadian Supreme Court until 1957. When legislation failed, the Quebec government pursued alternate means of stifling support for the Republican cause. For example, when Dr. Bethune toured the Province with a Republican delegation to raise support, the government responded by pressuring newspapers to refuse to run their

⁴¹ L.M. Gouin, *The French-Canadians, Their Past and Their Aspirations* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1937), 122-125.

⁴² Julio de la Cueva, “Religious Persecution, Anticlerical Tradition and Revolution: On Atrocities against the Clergy during the Spanish Civil War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no. 3 (July 1998), 355, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/261121.pdf>; Marguerite Paulin. *Maurice Duplessis: Powerbroker, Politician* (Montreal: XYZ Publishing, 2005), 121; *Le Devoir*, “Monsignor Antoniutti had just been appointed Papal Delegate to Canada and Newfoundland,” July 14, 1938.

⁴³ Legislative Assembly of Quebec, March 24, 1937, Act to protect the Province against communistic propaganda, 41, accessed April 16, 2019, https://historyofrights.ca/wp-content/uploads/statutes/QC_Padlock.pdf.

advertisements, the police barred the doors to the event space, and eventually cut the electricity off to an alternate venue.⁴⁴

In addition to the anti-Communist sentiments in Canada, there were pro-fascist groups operating throughout the country. The Knights of Jacques Cartier, the National Social Christian Party, the National Socialist German Workers Part, the Deutsche Bund, the Arbeiter Gemeinschaft, the Fascio, the Italian United Moral Front and Dopo Lavoro all operated freely in Quebec. In Ontario, anti-Semitic sentiments led to the Christie Pits riots and the rise of the so called-Swastika Clubs which Toronto police did little to combat. Conversely, anti-Communist sentiments led to the creation of a Red Squad in the police force of Canada's largest city, targeting the CPC, socialists, labor, and trade unions. The Winnipeg based Canadian Nationalist Party was violently anti-Communist and frequently made a practice of disrupting public meetings of what it determined to be liberal organizations.⁴⁵

Media coverage of Canadian participation in the Spanish Civil War varied widely by region and ideological slant; however, this analysis broadly organizes them into two categories, pro-Republican supporting the government and pro-Nationalists supporting Franco. Comprehensive archiving of this media coverage is widely available in historical databases; however this work will examine a number of representative examples. The Canadian Press newspaper cooperative had very few correspondents outside the country and all newspapers and

⁴⁴; Supreme Court of Canada, March 8, 1957, *Switzman v. Elbling and A.G. of Quebec* SCR 285, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.canlii.org/en/ca/scc/doc/1957/1957canlii2/1957canlii2.html>; John Macfarlane, *Ernest Lapointe and Québec's Influence on Canadian Foreign Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 106.

⁴⁵ Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 4-5; Jocko Thomas, "Riot at Christie Pits: A day of shame in Toronto's history," *Toronto Star*, August 10, 1996; Gwyn Thomas, "This police chief was clownishly incompetent," *Toronto Star*, September 30, 1990; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, "No. 886 Weekly Summary Report on Communist and Fascist Organizations and Agitation in Canada," March 15, 1938, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=10&ved=2ahUKEwjfr-W-5PhAhVBdt8KHbo0C-cQFjAJegQIARAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fjournals.lib.unb.ca%2Findex.php%2FRCMP%2Farticle%2Fdownload%2F9576%2F9631&usg=AOvVaw39q6Tydw96QJzj3m36tRhX>.

periodicals tended to rely on a collection of reporting from the Associated Press (US), Reuters (Great Britain), and Havas (France); the last two of which were accused of being more heavily influenced by the policy of their respective governments.⁴⁶

The *Toronto Star*, *Winnipeg Free Press*, *Vancouver Province*, British Columbia's *Federationist*, *New Commonwealth* (Toronto), *Canadian Forum* (Toronto), and *New Frontier* (Toronto) were among those periodicals who demonstrated a pro-Republican bias in their coverage. These newspapers tended to be owned by organizations less supportive of unbridled free enterprise and their ideologies ranged from communist through socialist to labor and liberal perspectives. Pro-Republican newspapers tended to have smaller circulations; however, the *Toronto Star* with a circulation of 243,217 and the *Winnipeg Free Press* with 60,802 were the exceptions to this. The editor of the *Toronto Star*, Joseph E. Atkinson, was a noted supporter of socialist beliefs and made it clear he saw Fascism as a threat to the world. In one of the less ideologically charged reports on the start of the Spanish Civil War, the *Winnipeg Free Press* correctly identified the underlying frictions of land reform and the underrepresentation of rightist parties in parliament who had won 54% of the popular vote but less than half the seats in the legislative chambers of Spain. Instead, most major newspapers tended to ignore these facts in favor of the violence and anti-religious bias of the Republicans.⁴⁷

Western Canada was home to a disproportional number of Canadian volunteers and press coverage tended to be more favorable. The 11 March 1939 edition of the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* covered a local controversy concerning an application by the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion to conduct a fundraising tag day. The city denied the application on the basis that the committee felt a member of the organization, Reverend Father Thomas, an Anglican minister, had deliberately misrepresented himself as a member of the Roman Catholic clergy. Elsewhere in the

⁴⁶ Mary Biggar Peck, *Red Moon Over Spain: Canadian Media Reaction to the Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (Ottawa: Love Printing Service, 1988), 10-11.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10, 31, 33.

same newspaper, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engine men petitioned the city council to reconsider its position, demonstrating the contentious issue that support for Canadian volunteers constituted.⁴⁸

On 11 February 1939, the *Edmonton Journal* covered the return of thirty-one Spanish Civil War volunteers to cheering crowds in Vancouver and Edmonton. At an Edmonton banquet a member of the provincial legislature reportedly feted the volunteers and declared Canadians “must be thankful to these men for blazing a trail in order to show us what true democracy means.”⁴⁹ This illustrates how even after a connection was established between volunteers and the communist movement within Canada, they were not seen as inherently undemocratic in principle. Irish-Canadian John Magrath was insistent he and other volunteers would not hesitate to fight for democracy and liberty again.⁵⁰

The *Calgary Herald* of 26 December 1936 highlighted one of the most famous Canadians volunteers, who was in fact no Canadian at all. The onetime commander of the international brigades, General Emil Kleber was described as a picturesque general of French and German descent and Canadian nationality. Alternatively posing as an Austrian-Canadian, General Kleber was born Mafred Stern and was in fact a member of Soviet military intelligence who served as a military advisory to the Republican government before suffering ideological differences with Madrid and ultimately falling out of favor with Stalin. This highlights the difficulty in establishing the exact number and character of Canadian volunteers.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, “Asks Retraction and Explanation from the Mayor,” March 11, 1939.

⁴⁹ *Edmonton Journal*, “1,000 Edmontonians Greet Veterans Returning from Fighting in Spain War,” February 11, 1939.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ A. C. Cummings, “Former Canadian at Head of International Force Aiding Madrid Defenders,” *Calgary Daily Herald*, December 26, 1936; *Montreal Gazette*, “Fascists Halted, Madrid Announces: Kleber Given Command,” February 4, 1937.

Whereas in the West there were frequent defenses of the motivations of volunteers and calls for the government to accept responsibility for their welfare, in Ontario the press coverage was generally critical of this idea. A scathing piece in the 17 October 1945 *Windsor Daily Star* at best questions the naivety of Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War, and at worst accuses them of outright treachery. It closes by declaring in no uncertain terms Canadians should not be expected to foot the bill for “one of the Kremlin’s lost causes.”⁵² The *Windsor Star* of 19 January 1937 described in detail the somewhat unusual circumstances of Bert Levy who allegedly left Canada for Great Britain to improve his health and inquire about a WW1 pension before crossing over to the European continent to “make the world safer” for his wife and daughter.⁵³ The paper described him as a “radical idealist.”⁵⁴ The Toronto based *Globe & Mail* newspaper and national *Maclean’s* magazine were also decidedly pro-Nationalist in coverage but this likely had more to do with their conscious attempt at carving out an ideological niche in the crowded Toronto newspaper market.⁵⁵

The 11 May 1940 edition of the *Ottawa Citizen* highlighted four brothers from Carleton Place who volunteered for service in WW2, including Wilfred West who previously served with the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Similarly, despite his mixed battlefield performance, Edward Cecil-Smith contributed for the Canadian Press on a series on Soviet Army strategy from the perspective of the commander of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. Even as WW2 progressed, Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War continued to enjoy particular support from certain segments of society. The 27 August 1942 edition of *Victoria Daily Times* covered a generous

⁵² R. M. Harrison, “Now,” *Windsor Star*, October 17, 1945.

⁵³ *Windsor Star*, “Windsorite is in Spain,” January 19, 1937.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ *Vancouver Sun*, “Ottawa Urged to Ease Social Load: Spanish War Vets,” October 15, 1945; Mamie Maloney, “Spain 1936 and 1945,” *Vancouver Sun*, July 9, 1945; Mary E. Moynihan, “Tribute to an Airman,” *Regina Leader Post*, June 28, 1945; M. Pennington, “Mackenzie Papineau Regiment,” *Vancouver Sun*, November 18, 1946; Jack Sutherland, “Veterans of Spain,” *Edmonton Journal*, April 3, 1946; Peck, *Red Moon Over Spain*, 10.

\$1,466.70 donation to the Mackenzie Papineau Veterans' Association by the Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders' Union.⁵⁶

Press coverage in the Province of Quebec was generally less favorable. The major Montreal based newspapers *La Patrie*, *Le Devoir*, and the English language *Gazette* all represented the prevailing views of the Roman Catholic Church which until the 1960s held considerable sway over Quebec government and business interests. Similarly, the coverage of the conflict by Ottawa's French language *Le Droit* was virtually indistinguishable from its Quebec counterparts. The Roman Catholic Church's involvement in the media landscape represented their successful maintenance of the subjective reality of French speaking Canada. However, there were exceptions and as of 13 September 1937, the *Montreal Gazette*, an English language daily, was still publishing articles which questioned the wisdom of the non-intervention movement. This movement was permitting Franco's rebel forces to benefit from the direct assistance of hundreds of thousands of German and Italian troops while the Republican forces suffered from an arms embargo. The paper also quoted American author Elliot Paul as saying Spain had no more Communists per capita than found in Canada.⁵⁷

By 1940, the Molotov–Ribbentrop Nonaggression Pact and subsequent invasion of Eastern Europe raised anti-Communist sentiments in Canada. The 21 September 1940 *Montreal Gazette* covered the arrest of Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion veteran Muni Erlichman for activities in violation of the Defence of Canada Regulations, specifically, association with “Communist underground activity.”⁵⁸ Under the nom de plume “Nemo” or nobody, an opinion

⁵⁶ Edward Cecil-Smith, “The Red Army -No. 3,” *Lethbridge Herald*, July 7, 1941; Edward Cecil-Smith, “Russians Heavy in Fire Power: Have Modern Rifles, Machineguns,” *Montreal Gazette*, July 5, 1941; Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause*, 269; *Victoria Daily Times Colonist*, “Boilermakers Aid Spanish War Veterans,” August 27, 1942.

⁵⁷ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Random House, 1966), 14; Elliot Paul, “E.R. Paul Sees Win for Madrid Force,” *Montreal Gazette*, September 13, 1937.

⁵⁸ *Montreal Gazette*, “Toronto University Fellow Seized for Alleged Communistic Activity,” September 21, 1940.

piece in the 11 February 1941 *Calgary Herald* criticized the notion the Spanish Civil War was a conflict between democracy and fascism, defending the non-interventionism strategy.⁵⁹

The defection of Igor Gouzenko in September 1945 revealed the extent of the Soviet spy network in Canada and resulted in renewed mistrust of those associated with the Communist movement. This included the Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War. There were accusations in the *Montreal Daily Star* and other papers that hundreds of Communists infiltrated the Canadian Army, with the intent of diminishing the contributions of those Mac-Paps who had gone on to serve during WW2. The *Ottawa Citizen* confirmed the practice of requiring Canadian volunteers to surrender their passports contributed to Soviet espionage activities.⁶⁰

With the opening of hostilities between Germany and the Soviet Union, and subsequent endorsement of the Allied cause by Stalin, the public perception of Canadian volunteers and their association with Communism began to change. Canadian communists, including Mac-Pap veteran Ray Henderson, were emboldened to publicly call for an end to the criminalization of their ideology and the rapid expansion of Canada's war effort to include conscription. By 1945, the reputation of Canadian volunteers was sufficiently improved to allow William Beeching to run for provincial government despite publicly acknowledging his service in Spain, connection to the Communist movement, and resultant internment for the first two years of WW2. An article by Jack Scott in the 14 November 1946 *Vancouver Sun* highlighted the now more common assertion that the Spanish Civil War, Italian invasion of Ethiopia, and 1931 Japanese invasion of China constituted an informal start to the global war against fascism.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Nemo, "The Spanish Civil War and the Democracies," *Calgary Herald*, February 11, 1941.

⁶⁰ *Ottawa Citizen*, "Letters from Citizen Readers: Communists Fought for Canada," March 8, 1946.

⁶¹ *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, "Left-Wing Group for New Front: Wants Conscription, and Legalization for Communists," May 30, 1942; *Regina Leader Post*, "Beeching Nominated," October 31, 1945; Jack Scott, "Our Town: The Mac-Paps," *Vancouver Sun*, November 14, 1946.

Although not an official participant to the 1936 Non-Intervention Agreement, Canada like the United States, signaled its intention to pursue an official policy of non-intervention. In a memorandum to Prime Minister Mackenzie King, Under-Secretary of State Oscar D. Skelton highlighted the existence of the extant British Foreign Enlistment Act of 1870 but questioned its applicability to a civil war. To address this, Skelton discussed the possibility of introducing Canadian legislation to strengthen the government's position. On 31 July 1937, the Canadian government passed the Foreign Enlistment Act to clarify the applicability of earlier British statutes and expressly prohibit the recruitment of volunteers to serve in the international brigades. This was important since earlier laws were frequently ineffectual and determined to apply only to armed conflict against a state, and not to Franco's rebels.⁶²

Declassified letters between the RCMP and Skelton detail how the police actively tracked suspected volunteers and the businesses enabling their travel to Spain. On 23 June 1937, Deputy Commissioner George L. Jennings informed Skelton that the RCMP estimated 20 individuals per week were departing the port of Montreal for Spain, with the majority coming from Toronto and Winnipeg, and being of Ukrainian descent. The document also informs the Under-Secretary the RCMP is aware of the Communist Party's intent to recruit a further 500 volunteers in the next 3-4 months. Senior officials in the RCMP feared those volunteers who went to Spain and survived to return to Canada might bring with them not only their revolutionary zeal but also skills honed on the battlefield. However, although a number of the volunteers went on to become influential members of society and serve in allied militaries during WW2, the only evidence of any subsequent armed violence against Canadian authorities was the violent death of Tom Danek, during an armed robbery in 1951.⁶³

⁶² Oscar D. Skelton, "Memorandum to Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King," January 19, 1937, File 5, Victor Hoar Papers, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC; *Daily Clarion*, "First Canadian Volunteers Nearing Spain," January 28, 1937.

⁶³ Deputy Commissioner George Leslie Jennings, "Letter to the Canadian Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs," June 23, 1937, File 5, Victor Hoar Papers, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC; Commissioner James Howden MacBrien, "Letter to the Canadian Under-

The extent to which the RCMP feared the spread of Communism is evident in a letter written by inspector Charles Rivett-Carnac to the Undersecretary of State for External Affairs on 24 January 1939. He stated the “main point which I wish to make in this connection is that while the Communist program embodies the destruction of the state apparatus and the setting up of a new economic order, the Nazi program which has been brought into being in Germany has retained the principles of the old system to the extent that a modified form of capitalism now exists in that country.”⁶⁴ This demonstrates that only nine months before the occupation of Poland and subsequent declaration of war against Germany, many Canadian officials still saw the spread of Communism as the greater threat.

The RCMP recommended the government bar returning veterans from reentering Canada; however, in memorandums to the Prime Minister, the Department of External Affairs opposed this on the grounds Canada was not officially party to the Non-Intervention Agreement. Additionally, immigration officials stated the government could not interpret the Immigration Act to deny reentry solely on the grounds of having committed a misdemeanor. However, officials ultimately agreed legal action was possible only against those persons who went to Spain after the passing of the Foreign Enlistment Act if suitable evidence of their participation was available.⁶⁵

Although no one was ultimately charged under the new Foreign Enlistment Act, the risk of a \$2000 fine and possibly imprisonment for up to two years drove recruitment underground and limited its effectiveness. From a national security perspective authorities were conflicted on the importance of preventing volunteers from participating, with RCMP commissioner James

Secretary of State for External Affairs,” December 9, 1937, File 5, Victor Hoar Papers, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC; Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 12; Benjamin Goldring, Thomas Danek: Life and Death, October 27, 1984, William Kardash Fonds, P7150/30, Archives of Manitoba.

⁶⁴ Charles Rivett-Carnac, “Letter to Norman Robertson, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs,” January 24, 1939, File 127, MG30E163, Norman Robertson Fonds, LAC.

⁶⁵ “Questions Re Spanish volunteers,” 1938, File 5, Victor Hoar Papers, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC.

Howden MacBrien questioning whether it was “so bad if some undesirables ran off to Spain and possibly did not return.”⁶⁶ However, from a political standpoint, the issue threatened to expose an ideological divide between Canadians, something unacceptable to the governing Liberal party. There is evidence RCMP Constable Frank Zaneth thoroughly investigated senior officials in the CPC and was preparing warrants for cross country raids when the Republican cause suffered a reversal of fortunes halting recruitment in Canada. Instead of charging the accused with violations of the Foreign Enlistment Act which carried a maximum two-year sentence, the lead prosecutor François-Phillippe Brais planned to lay charges under Section 573 of the Criminal Code, conspiracy to commit an indictable offence; namely the Foreign Enlistment Act. This would have instead allowed for sentences up to seven years. Ultimately, diminished recruitment and the risk aversion of the Mackenzie King government led to a decision to cease all formal investigations.⁶⁷

Instead, the Canadian government pursued less-formal avenues of combating recruitment, including leveraging its influence with the business sector. Canadian Pacific Steamships (CPR) was pressured to refuse transit to those suspected of travelling with the intent of participating in the Spanish Civil War, leading CPR to claim there was no space available when agents from the recruiting committee attempted to book space for a group. The requirement for passports to be co-signed by someone of authority who knew the applicant for a number of years made it difficult for those living a transient lifestyle, often riding the rails in search of work, to apply for one. Additionally, even where prospective volunteers were able to successfully navigate the bureaucracy to secure a passport, frequently officials stamped them as “Not Valid” for travel to Spain.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ MacBrien, “Letter to the Canadian Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs.”

⁶⁷ Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 6; François-Phillippe Brais, “Letter to Canadian Deputy Minister of Justice W. Stuart Edwards,” January 25, 1938, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC.

⁶⁸ Liversedge, *Mac-Pap*, 38; Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 11.

Concerning national responsibility for rendering assistance to volunteers captured by Nationalist forces, Prime Minister Mackenzie King approved a departmental memo stating government officials could make inquiries that might alleviate any especially harsh treatment and that further action was appropriate for those engaged in humanitarian work or on behalf of combatants under the age of twenty-one. Despite these clarifications, the Prime Minister was adamant Canada should only actively arrange for the withdrawal of Canadian volunteers if other countries took similar action or if their presence in England or France jeopardized good relations with those countries.⁶⁹

Post-War Reintegration

On 21 September 1938 Spanish Prime Minister Juan Negrín formally announced the government was reorganizing the Spanish Republican Armed Forces and withdrawing the International Brigades. He did so primarily in the hopes that eliminating international participation would make it more difficult for Franco's forces to justify their continuing support from Italy and Germany which far outweighed the support the Republicans were receiving. By 27 September the majority of Canadian volunteers assembled at the Monserrat Monastery north of Barcelona to wait for arrangements for their transit back to Canada. Few of the volunteers had any documentation to establish their Canadian citizenship and the government of Canada initially relied on the League of Nations Military Commission to conduct exit interviews. The interviews began on 4 November and were later augmented by the efforts of Colonel Andrew O'Kelly, assistant commissioner of the London office of the Canadian Immigration Service. O'Kelly used a series of questions, including demanding returning volunteers identify a famous Canadian to establish their status according to probable national loyalties. He divided volunteers into three

⁶⁹ "Questions Re Spanish volunteers," 1938, File 5, Victor Hoar Papers, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC.

groups: Canadians by birth, British born and/or naturalized citizens, and those who he considered aliens. Volunteers in this last group faced the most elaborate questioning.⁷⁰

Canadian government archives include memorandums to the Prime Minister demonstrating the close attention he continued to pay to the repatriation of volunteers as it was underway. This included confirmation those reported in media reports had indeed satisfied their right to return requirements with Canadian immigrations authorities. However, some confusion existed concerning the transfer of Canadian volunteers held in Nationalist prisoner of war camps at wars end. Ultimately, Canada repatriated all except two of the thirty-one Canadians held at the San Pedro de Cardeña camp. Isaac Matson of Vancouver died of cancer and Ferenc Papp of Windsor succumbed to pneumonia.⁷¹

The Republican government was bankrupt and increasingly at risk of collapse, putting the Canadian volunteers at increased risk. With the situation deteriorating, the French government threatened to place any unclaimed international veterans of the conflict in camps unless financial arrangements were in place. The Canadian Pacific Railway agreed to assist in the repatriation of Canadian volunteers after the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion committed to raising the necessary funds. In response, the CPC mortgaged many of its buildings to defer the cost. Once in transit from the conflict zone, Canadians faced the threat of attack from Nationalist planes. Although having acquiesced to the decision of the government to allow the repatriation of

⁷⁰ Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause*, 269.

⁷¹ Oscar D. Skelton, "Memorandum from Under-Secretary Skelton to Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King," January 24, 1939, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC; Carl Geiser, "Canadians in the San Pedro de Cardena concentration camp on September 16th 1936" Prisoners of War History Project, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC; Virtual Research Environment of Canadian Cultural History About the Spanish Civil War, "Volunteers - Ferenc Papp," accessed March 16, 2019, <http://spanishcivilwar.ca/volunteers/ferenc-papp>; Petrou, *Renegades*, 218, 225, 230.

volunteers, declassified records demonstrate the RCMP actively monitored the source of donations to this cause.⁷²

The main body of returning Canadian volunteers departed 27 January 1938 on the SS Duchess of Richmond and arrived at Saint John, New Brunswick on 4 February 1939. Despite the divided public sentiment concerning the conflict, large crowds greeted returning veterans in Canada. The growing threat of fascism resulted in more favorable coverage in main stream anglophone newspapers and periodicals. Nearly 10,000 citizens of Vancouver were in attendance to greet thirty-one returning veterans with cheers of “Viva Republica Espanol” and the mayor lauded them for their sacrifices to safeguard democracy.⁷³ However, not all the reception was positive and there were reports of Montrealers greeting returning veterans with fascist salutes. The Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion organization helped facilitate the return of Canadian veterans, provided allowances, and facilitated medical treatment. During the three-month period from January to March 1938, the association fundraised enough to expend \$18,921.71 on the rehabilitation of veterans. After accounting for inflation, this is in excess of \$317,000 in present day terms.⁷⁴

After the initial fanfare, Canadian veterans returned to the realities of the Great Depression and RCMP surveillance. When Canada officially declared war on Germany, the former Commanding Officer of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion offered the services of the surviving Canadian veterans; however, the government refused the offer. The nonaggression pact between the USSR and Nazi Germany led the Canadian government to treat those identified as

⁷² Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 190-193; “Recruiting for the Spanish Army Canada”, December 15, 1970, RG146, CSIS files 95-A-00088, LAC.

⁷³ James Dyer, “10,000 Cheer Vancouver Homecoming of Spanish War Veterans,” *Vancouver Sun*, February 11, 1939.

⁷⁴ Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers*, 197-198; “Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion Cash Income and Expenditure Report,” April 6, 1939, MG30E173, Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion collection, LAC; Bank of Canada, “Inflation Calculator,” accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>.

fascists or communists with equal distrust. The threat of persecution prevented many veterans from sharing their stories publicly and resulted in a great deal of misinformation about the goals and accomplishments of Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War.⁷⁵

In 1939, the Canadian Government used the War Measures Act to pass the Defence of Canada Regulations. This allowed the government to censor hundreds of newspapers, ban religious, cultural, and political organizations, including Jehovah's Witnesses and the CPC, and intern an estimated 24,000 civilians in more than forty camps. Offences included anything deemed "in any manner prejudicial to the public safety or the safety of the state."⁷⁶ The overwhelming majority of those interned without habeas corpus were Japanese-Canadians, but among the exceptions to this were a number of Spanish Civil War veterans including William Beeching, Bob Kerr (Political commissar of Canadians at Albacete), Alexander Miller (Company Commander), Orton Wade (Battery Commissar), Jack Taylor aka Muni Erlick (Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion liaison and *Daily Clarion* correspondent), and Teodor Spiwak. It is unclear whether the government singled out these individuals for their senior status among Canadian volunteers or for their strong association with the Communist Party which often aided in realizing senior command. Following their two-year internment, a number of these individuals went on to serve Canada in WW2 including William Beeching and Jack Taylor; the latter of whom perished on 20 August 1944 in Normandy.⁷⁷

Some of those not interned also went on to serve in WW2 in Canadian and foreign military units. Some, like Terrence Cunningham, tried to enlist in the army during WW2; however, authorities rejected them owing to their time in Spain. One of those who went on to serve in WW2 was Florence Pike, one of the Canadian women who volunteered for service in

⁷⁵ Michael Petrou, "Spain honours a Canadian who joined its fight against fascism," *Macleans*, October 21, 2011.

⁷⁶ Committee on Emergency Legislation, *Defence of Canada Regulations* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1939), 29.

⁷⁷ *Regina Leader Post*, "Beeching Nominated," October 31, 1945.

Spain. Although repatriated to the United Kingdom for poor health, she later served as a civilian nurse during the early part of WW2. Records indicate as many as 125 Canadian veterans of the Spanish civil war fought for allied forces. This is relatively high considering the high rate of casualties, average age of volunteers for Spain, and the reality that not all returned to Canada. These volunteers stepped forward despite the urging of the CPC which echoed the Comintern position that WW2 was an imperialist conflict. The high number of volunteers for WW2 supports the personal accounts of many volunteers discussed above who sought to establish their motivations as primarily anti-Fascist rather than pro-Communist.⁷⁸

Despite extensive efforts by the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion, the Canadian government repeatedly resisted any post-war recognition of the sacrifice of Canadian volunteers. This was likely owing in part to a desire for positive relations with Francoist Spain which was seen as a strategic partner during the Cold War. After Franco's death in 1975, Spain pursued the "pacto del olvido," or pact of forgetting; deliberately ignoring Franco's legacy to permit a peaceful transition to democracy. This approach delayed supporters of the Republican cause full recognition of their efforts to preserve Spanish democracy.⁷⁹ In 1996, the Spanish government granted international volunteers the Spanish citizenship promised to them by President Juan Negrin sixty years earlier. Although Canadian volunteers never got the formal recognition they sought from the government of Canada, gradually public opinion improved in their favor. From 1989 to 2015, authorities across Canada erected five monuments recognizing the sacrifice of Canadian volunteers who went to Spain.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Petrou. *Renegades*, 174-175; Virtual Research Environment of Canadian Cultural History About the Spanish Civil War, "Volunteers - Florence Mildred Pike," accessed March 16, 2019, <http://spanishcivilwar.ca/volunteers/florence-mildred-pike>.

⁷⁹ Angela M. Guarino, "Chasing Ghosts: Pursuing Retroactive Justice for Franco-Era Crimes Against Humanity," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review* 33, no. 1 (January 2000): 62.

⁸⁰ *The Volunteer: Journal of the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1996), accessed April 4, 2019, http://www.alba-valb.org/resources/document-library/the-volunteer-march-1996/the-volunteer-march-1996/at_download/albita_file; Dalton Pagani, Monuments,

Parallel to Foreign Fighter Flow in Vietnam

The Vietnam War was an undeclared conflict officially fought between North and South Vietnam but with the support of major world powers including the Soviet Union, China, and the United States. Conflict in Vietnam spanned the French colonial rule of the late 1800s through the Japanese occupation of WW2 until the fall of Saigon in 1975. However, this paper will focus on the period which included an escalation of US involvement in 1960 through cessation of US combat activities in 1973. Although the US could not actively recruit in Canada, there is evidence to suggest the United States expanded recruitment offices near the border to accommodate it. Some American recruiting stations even hung signs which read “Bienvenue Canadiens.”⁸¹ Furthermore, US draft laws applied to citizens and aliens alike. The US government required all male Canadian residents of the United States of call up-age to register for selective service within six months of entry. Once registered, Canadian citizens became eligible for compulsory military service after one year.⁸²

Despite seeking to remain neutral in the conflict, the Vietnam War was the fourth most deadly war in terms of Canadian casualties with at least 134 Canadians killed or listed as missing in action while serving with US forces, and four others who died while participating with the International Control Commission. The reticence of Canadian authorities to acknowledge the volunteers who served with US forces, and the unwillingness of the US government to release records of service, make it difficult to ascertain the true number of Canadian volunteers involved in the conflict. However, by some estimates, 12,000 to 30,000 Canadian volunteers volunteered the

“The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: Perspectives on Canada and the Spanish Civil War,” accessed March 19, 2019, <https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/macpaps/monuments/>.

⁸¹ Stephen J. Thorne, “Born on the First of July,” *Legion Magazine*, January 19, 2018, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2018/01/born-on-the-first-of-july/>.

⁸² Fred Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors: Canadians in the Vietnam War* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1990), 35-36.

still extant Foreign Enlistment Act to participate in the Vietnam War; grossly exceeding the Spanish Civil War and roughly offsetting the American draft dodgers who fled north.⁸³

Characteristics & Motivations

Volunteers came from primarily blue collar and middle-class families and the majority were in their late teens or early twenties. Many volunteers who joined the war did so because the United States drafted them, they held dual citizenship, lived in the United States, or were seeking American citizenship; with some sources attributing this for as many as a third of the volunteers. Although total numbers may never be accurately ascertained, what is known is that in addition to pre-existing dual citizens, between 1967 and 1976, 3,244 Canadians in the US armed forces became naturalized American citizens. Contrary to the case of the Spanish Civil War, the majority of Canadian volunteers in Vietnam were not running from poor economic conditions or general joblessness. An exception to this was the poor economic and otherwise bleak conditions found on First Nations reserves which might also help explain their disproportionate representation among volunteers. Despite strong economic conditions, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill) still stood out an attractive proposition for some Canadian youth who either wished to pursue self-betterment or to provide it for their children in the future.⁸⁴

Although overall employment statistics were quite favorable, the Canadian military was going through a tumultuous period which included unification, drastic reductions, and radically changing mission sets. Consequently, volunteering to join the Canadian military was less

⁸³ Chris Corday, "Lost to history: the Canadians who fought in Vietnam," *Canadian Broadcast Corporation*, November 10, 2015, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/lost-to-history-the-canadians-who-fought-in-vietnam-1.3304440>; *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, "The Vietnam War: Canada's Role, Part One," *CBC Radio*, April 23, 2015, accessed April 8, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/rewind/the-vietnam-war-canada-s-role-part-one-1.3038110>.

⁸⁴ Fred Gaffen, *Cross Border Warriors* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1995), 170, 183, 346; Michael Cope, "2,000 Canadian Volunteers Fighting in Vietnam," *Port Huron Times*, January 11, 1968.

attractive and often more difficult than crossing the border to volunteer with the US military. After applying first for the Canadian Forces, then US Air Force, Navy, and Marines, John Laurin of Montreal was discouraged by the long wait times and instead accepted a three year enlistment with the US Army. The urge to demonstrate one's masculinity or entrance into adulthood was frequently cited as a rationale for Canadian veterans volunteering for service with the US military. Douglas Cassidy of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, said he joined the Marines because, "I was a spoiled brat and I thought I needed that sort of discipline and I wanted to fight against what I thought was Communism."⁸⁵ Many others like Alistair Livingston, Thomas Tompkins, Gerald Giroldi, and Edward Lamour gave up positions and even commissions as officers in the Canadian military to cross the border and join the American cause.⁸⁶

Strong cultural ties between Canada and the United States distinguishes the Vietnam conflict from that of the Spanish Civil War and contributes to explaining the unprecedented number of Canadian volunteers. In the words of Joe Collard, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America chapter in the border town of Sault Ste Marie, the perception was volunteers were "neighbors helping neighbors."⁸⁷ One particularly noteworthy volunteer was the son of future Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jacques Alfred Dextraze. Richard Dextraze lamented that the Canadian Forces were not at war and felt he had to do his part to help the American cause. Dextraze joined the Marines in 1967 and the US government posthumously awarded him the Silver Star for actions that resulted in his death near Cam Lo in Quang Tric Province on 23 April 1968. Cultural similarities also help to explain the relatively high number of indigenous volunteers relative to their representation within the Canadian population. The

⁸⁵ Christopher Wren, "Vietnam War Also Haunts Canadians Who Volunteered," *New York Times*, January 24, 1985, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/01/24/world/vietnam-war-also-haunts-canadians-who-volunteered.html>.

⁸⁶ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), 261; Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors*, 48, 72, 162, 168; Cope, "2,000 Canadian Volunteers Fighting in Vietnam."

⁸⁷ Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors*, 39.

Mohawk reservation at Caughnawaga alone produced about twenty-five Vietnam veterans from a population of 4,500. As Teddy Canadian, a veteran of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) explained, “there's never been any border for Mohawk people, to us, it's all one continent.”⁸⁸ The emphasis placed on the warrior culture within Mohawk society likely further contributed to their high rates of volunteerism.⁸⁹

Approximately 7,500 women served with US forces in Vietnam; however, records suggest only a few were Canadian volunteers. One such volunteer was Marsha Jordan who was born in Sydney, Nova Scotia. She moved to Boston at the age of sixteen and following nursing school pursued American citizenship with the specific goal of becoming a flight nurse. For two years between 1969 and 1971 she flew in and out of Vietnam evacuating casualties, ultimately retiring after twenty years in the United States Air Force (USAF).⁹⁰

A recurring motivation for volunteerism was the sentiment that Communism presented a threat to the Canadian way of life. Douglas Cassidy of Saskatoon, and Rob McSorley of Vancouver attributed their service to this motivation. Others like Alexander Kandic reported seeking adventure but also being motivated by the desire to combat Communism. Author Fred Gaffen attributes anti-Communist sentiment among recent immigrants from Hungary and other Soviet satellite states as a leading motivator for volunteers.⁹¹

Some volunteers were veterans of earlier conflicts in which Canada actively participated alongside the United States. This was the case of George Odom, who was born in Albany,

⁸⁸ Wren, “Vietnam War Also Haunts Canadians.”

⁸⁹ Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors*, 38; *Ottawa Citizen*, “Vietnam action kills Ottawa general’s son,” May 2, 1969; Anthony Patrick Curtis, “Warriors of the Skyline: A Gendered Study of Mohawk Warrior Culture” (master’s thesis, Marshall University, 2005), 10, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://mds.marshall.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1049&context=etd>.

⁹⁰ Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors*, 218-219.

⁹¹ Corday, “Lost to history;” Gaffen, *Cross Border Warriors*, 191-197; Clyde Farnsworth, “Canada Rebuffs Veterans of U.S. Forces in Vietnam,” *New York Times*, June 19, 1994.

Georgia but joined the Canadian Army to fight in WW2 prior to the entrance of the United States in the conflict. Eventually Odom would finish the war serving with Americans and go on to serve in Korea before going to Vietnam as a command sergeant major. Odom who considers himself an “ex-Canadian” is one of only a few hundred veterans awarded three combat infantryman badges for active ground combat while assigned as members of either an infantry, Ranger, or Special Forces unit in three distinct qualifying periods.⁹²

Bard O’Neill classifies insurgents “fighting for a new system based on distribution equality and centrally controlled structures” as an Egalitarian insurgency. The Việt Cộng’s mobilization of the people in order to radically transform the social structure of South Vietnam qualifies as this form of insurgency.⁹³ Conversely, although Canadian volunteers for Vietnam do not meet all formal criteria of a foreign fighter, nor do they resemble the definition of a mercenary since they were formal members of the US armed forces, paid commensurate to other combatants, and were frequently ideologically motivated. As they illegally sought to carry out acts of violence against groups trying to effect change, Canadian volunteers share many similarities with Bard’s definition of a Preservationist insurgency.⁹⁴

Public Perception and Government Response

The families of many Canadian volunteers for the Vietnam war faced hostility from American draft dodgers and anti-war protestors at home. For example, in response to a 1968 birth announcement in a Toronto newspaper which mentioned her husband was in Vietnam, Fran Ridout received anonymous insulting phone calls and hate mail. Some like Joseph Edward of Windsor, Ontario returned to Canada and ran afoul of the law. Edward was arrested and jailed on

⁹² Gaffen, *Cross Border Warriors*, 176.

⁹³ O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 20.

⁹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 44/34 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries, December 4, 1989; O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 27.

a number of charges in Canada including conspiracy to commit fraud, before moving to the US where he was jailed for twelve years on a charge of aggravated robbery. Edwards recounts standing in front of the Canadian judge who had learned from his lawyer he was a Vietnam veteran. The judge reportedly lectured him about how the conflict was unjust before passing judgement. Canadian veterans like Daniel Cunningham of Hamilton, Ontario who elected to stay in the United States after their service also reported feeling alienated and rejected.⁹⁵

The treatment of Vietnam War veterans by the Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) was only marginally better. In 1970, the Canadian Legion voted to confirm Canadian Vietnam veterans were ineligible to join their organization. Those who returned to Canada often longed for the comradeship they had come to rely on, but were instead shunned as mercenaries by legion delegates like Harold Bastable who feared any official recognition would set a dangerous precedent. Similarly, the Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Branch of the legion argued Vietnam vets ought to be seen as distinct from those who fought in a war declared or officially supported by Canada, and drew a direct comparison to the Spanish Civil War as precedent. Although the government of Canada has never formally acknowledged the citizens who were killed or declared missing in action in Vietnam, in 1994, the RCL finally recognized Canadian Vietnam veterans for regular membership.⁹⁶

Although the government and organizations like the RCL sought to ignore the existence of these volunteers, their participation nonetheless had strategic consequences for Canada. As a member of the International Control Commission (ICC) overseeing the implementation of the Geneva Agreements it was important Canada appear neutral. Failure to do so risked international or domestic condemnation that could disrupt the peace process and/or interrupt the \$12.5 billion

⁹⁵ Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors*, 155, 211-212, 228-229.

⁹⁶ Harold Bastable, *Legion magazine*, September 1987, 27; Royal Canadian Legion, "Membership and Eligibility and Remembrance Day Ceremonies," Circular No. 88/1/2 from Dominion Command to all branches, January 1988; Corday, "Lost to history."

of Pentagon purchases that fueled a 6 percent annual growth in GDP and record low unemployment. Similarly, the return of volunteers to Canada had far-reaching domestic implications. Canadian volunteers reported a higher rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) attributed to their isolation from other veterans and the absence of public support and health programs to aid with the transition to civilian life. Not only did the individuals who returned from the war suffer this social isolation but the anti-war movement within Canada often had implications for their families. Some reported that after their sons left for the conflict, family friends stopped talking to them.⁹⁷

Although the social conditions on indigenous reserves had been the impetus for some volunteers to fight with US forces, the larger relative number of individuals from these areas in some cases meant that returnees felt less isolated. According to Arthur B. Diabo, who served with the US Marines, he felt he got a better homecoming on the Caughnawaga reservation in Quebec than many other non-indigenous volunteers did elsewhere. To fill the void of official recognition, some American veterans took up the cause for their Canadian colleagues and privately funded a memorial that was built in Windsor, Ontario. “The North Wall” Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial now lists the names of 138 Canadians who died in the war.⁹⁸

Unlike returning volunteers of the Spanish Civil War, Canadian veterans of the Vietnam War initially lacked an organization like the Friends of the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion. In response, some Canadian volunteers formed the Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association to assist and support Vietnam and Vietnam War era veterans with among other things access to medical

⁹⁷ Victor Levant, “Vietnam War,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, September 8, 2016, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/vietnam-war>; Nancy Vogelsson, “Forgotten Vets? Canadians Who Crossed to Our Side,” *South Jersey Courier-Post*, May 30, 1973; Wren, “Vietnam War Also Haunts Canadians.”

⁹⁸ Wren, “Vietnam War Also Haunts;” Canadian Vietnam Veterans Association, Canadian Vietnam Veterans Memorial: “The North Wall,” CVVA.com, 2007, accessed March 19, 2019, <http://www.cvva.ca/north-wall-memorial.html>.

benefits and the goal of recognition as legitimate Canadian veterans. With the support of their American counterparts, this group was successful in lobbying US President Ronald Reagan to pass a bill into law on 20 May 1988 that authorized the payment of medical benefits to Canadian veterans on a reimbursement basis, eliminating the need for them to travel to the United States for all treatments.⁹⁹

Recognizing the special bond between Canada and the United States, the RCL now accepts anyone with service in the US military for full ordinary membership. Furthermore, anyone who was a Canadian or Commonwealth citizen while serving with the armed forces of Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea or South Vietnam during the Vietnam War are also eligible. However, despite the RCL and all major Canadian veterans' organizations finally recognizing the service of Canadian Vietnam War veterans, many still do not feel accepted or understood. The failure to bridge this divide continues to alienate those who fought for what they believed was a common cause. A final tragic example of this came in 1996 when Sgt John W. Blake lost his struggle with PTSD and the Department of Veterans Affairs denied his request to be buried in the military cemetery of his hometown of St. John's, Newfoundland.¹⁰⁰

Parallel to Foreign Fighter Flow in the Former Yugoslavia

Conflict in former Yugoslavia involved a series of separate but interrelated struggles for independence in present day Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and North Macedonia. The conflicts involved insurgencies fought largely along ethnic lines following the breakup of the Yugoslav state in 1991. Foreign fighters played a large role in the various interrelated conflicts that followed the breakup of the former Yugoslav state. Although it is impossible to know the exact

⁹⁹ Gaffen, *Unknown Warriors*, 2, 84; Robert H. Stretch, "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and the Canadian Vietnam Veteran," *Traumatic Stress* 3, no. 2 (April 1990): 3, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a208430.pdf>.

¹⁰⁰ Royal Canadian Legion, General By-Laws, July 2016, 17; Cathy Saint John, *One For The Boys* (St. John's, NL: Sinjin, 2018), 475.

numbers of volunteers, it is known Canadian volunteers fought alongside all major belligerent causes including Croat, Serb, and Bosniak.

In addition to those Canadians who volunteered to fight with irregular forces, approximately 40,000 Canadian military personnel served under UN and NATO missions, twenty-three of whom lost their lives while deployed in the Balkans. This case study focuses primarily on the irregular forces but highlights where their objectives came into conflict with those of the CAF.¹⁰¹

Characteristics & Motivations

Various diaspora in Canada channeled money, and many influential individuals returned to play important roles in the various governments and militaries. For example, Gojko Šušak was responsible for raising millions of dollars to fund the fledgling Hrvatsko vijeće obrane (HVO) or Croatian Defence Council before acting as the Minister of Defence throughout the Croatian War of Independence. The Croatian diaspora in particular witnessed a period of rapid growth during the 1960s and 1970s owing to a liberalization of Yugoslavian emigration policies, with approximately 15,000 immigrating during these two decades alone.¹⁰²

Nicholas Ribic, the Edmonton born son of a Yugoslav father, travelled to the Republika Srpska in 1992, to in his words, “fight Muslims.”¹⁰³ On 26 May 1995, Ribic kidnapped four UN peacekeepers including Captain Patrick Rechner of the Canadian Army. Captain Rechner was

¹⁰¹ National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, “Canadian Forces Operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Forces, July 6, 2018, accessed March 19, 2019, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=canadian-forces-operations-in-bosnia-herzegovina/hnps1u07>.

¹⁰² Vecernji List, “Gojko Susak,” *List News*, December 1, 2016, accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.vecernji.hr/enciklopedija/gojko-susak-18374>; Nir Arielli, *From Byron to bin Laden: A History of Foreign War Volunteers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 105-106.

¹⁰³ Adrian Humphreys, “Canadians’ Saga Puts NATO Strike on Trial,” *National Post*, June 14, 2008.

subsequently used as a human shield to protect Serbian ammunition bunkers from NATO airstrikes.¹⁰⁴

A few months later, Canadian John Fawzan detonated his vehicle borne suicide bomb outside a police headquarters in Rijeka, Croatia. The blast killed Fawzan and injured twenty-nine and, when al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya formally claimed responsibility for the blast, made it among the first suicide operations in Europe on behalf of an Islamic organization. The attack was in response to the capture of its leader Tal'at Fu'ad Qasim by authorities of the United States before his transfer to Egypt. Another example of a Canadian who volunteered with Bosniak forces was Fateh Kamel. Kamel emigrated from Algeria to Canada in 1988 and gained citizenship in 1993 before travelling to Bosnia to act as the logistics expert for the El-Mudzahedin. Hatred of Western society and its insulting attitudes towards Muslims motivated Kamel to volunteer with the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁰⁵

In an echo of earlier examples of foreign fighter flow, Canadian Army veteran Eric De Tommaso went to Croatia in search of adventure and met his untimely end at age twenty-three from a point-blank burst of a Kalashnikov. Reportedly he planned to leave the conflict shortly before his death in hopes of further adventure in Laos or Burma. Another Canadian who fought for the Croatian forces was Ronnie Pereversoff of British Columbia. Pereversoff reportedly went Absent Without Leave (AWOL) from the French Foreign Legion to fight with Croatian forces before returning, serving time in prison, completing his service, and again returning to the

¹⁰⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), "Edmonton man accused of hostage taking returned to Canada," *CBC News*, November 10, 2000, accessed March 19, 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton-man-accused-of-hostage-taking-returned-to-canada-1.187363>.

¹⁰⁵ Michael Taarnby Jensen, "Jihad in Denmark: An Overview and Analysis of Jihadi Activity in Denmark 1990-2006," (working paper, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2006), 18; Steve Hendricks, *A Kidnapping in Milan: The CIA on Trial* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 80; Evan F. Kohlmann, *The Afghan-Bosnian Mujahideen Network in Europe* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2004), 17; Jean-Louis Bruguere and Jean-Francois Ricard, "Requisitoire Definitif aux Fins de Non-Lieu. De Non-Lieu partiel. De Requalification. De Renvoi devant le Tribunal Correctionnel, de maintien sous Controle Judiciaire et de maintien en Detention," Paris Court of Appeal, 7, 9, 100, 126, 148.

Balkans where he too died. Pure examples of soldiers of fortune like this are rare amongst accounts of Canadian foreign fighters, but they undoubtedly exist.¹⁰⁶

In 1991, twin brothers Nick and Joe Glasnovich travelled to Croatia to fight for a fledgling country they had left at the age of eight, when Croatia was still part of a unified Yugoslavia. Nick was a veteran of the Canadian Army and the French Foreign Legion which he deserted to join the HVO. Despite growing up in what they believed was the best country in the world to raise children, they could not escape the Croat nationalism of their grandfather, a former personal secretary to Josip Ghebic, the Prime Minister of the short-lived Croatian state following WW2. According to Nick, they felt they were fighting a war of “biological survival.”¹⁰⁷ During the conflict, Serbian forces captured, tortured, and exploited Joe as an example of foreign fighters involved in the conflict. Accusations of war crimes followed both brothers; however, they elected to settle in Bosnia and Herzegovina where locals nonetheless treat them as heroes. Joe Glasnovich now goes by the name Željko Glasnović and is active as a far-right politician in the Croatian parliament, representing the Croatian diaspora.¹⁰⁸

Of the nine types of insurgents which Bard O’Neill identified in his analysis of insurgency and terrorism, Canadian volunteers fall primarily into secessionist and traditionalists. Those who fought alongside Croatian and Bosniak forces primarily sought to establish their own nation state or autonomous region; whereas those aligned with Serbian forces sought to restore a system dominated by the Serbian state and its proxy Republika Srpska.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Steve Haydock, *Maybe Tomorrow* (Coventry, UK: Panic Press, 2011), 268.

¹⁰⁷ David Pugliese, “Return to the home front: Why twin brothers from Alberta fought to defend their native country – Croatia,” *Ottawa Citizen*, October 18, 1997.

¹⁰⁸ Pugliese, “Return to the home front;” *Vecernji List*, “Željko Glasnović,” *List News*, December 1, 2016, accessed March 16, 2019, <https://www.vecernji.hr/enciklopedija/zeljko-glasnovic-18307>.

¹⁰⁹ O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 19-28.

Public Perception and Government Response

The complexity of the conflict that embroiled the former Yugoslavia meant that Canadians were far from united in their condemnation of any one belligerent. As an article from the *Ottawa Citizen* demonstrated, Canadians were aware all sides had legitimate grievances and committed unthinkable atrocities in the pursuit of their respective goals. The active participation of the Canadian Forces in a peacekeeping/peacemaking role complicated the status of Canadians who volunteered with local irregular forces and contributed to a negative public perception of them. Additionally, there was a great deal of media attention concerning the possibility of non-citizens responsible for war crimes seeking to immigrate to Canada. Accordingly, in 1996 the government of Canada instituted a visa requirement to aid in the detection of war criminals coming from the former Yugoslavia.¹¹⁰

However, those volunteers who already held Canadian citizenship or residency status were able to quietly re-enter Canadian society far more easily. Although there were deportations of personnel who made fraudulent immigration applications, the only known prosecution of a Canadian citizen for participation in the conflict was the aforementioned Nicholas Ribic. Canada extradited Ribic from Germany and ultimately found him guilty for his part in the kidnapping of Captain Patrick Rechner.¹¹¹

The case of Fateh Kamel introduced above is an example of Canada's struggle to deal with returnees from this conflict. Authorities in Jordan arrested Kamel and allowed France to extradite and sentence him to eight years in prison for his part in an unrelated terror plot. After

¹¹⁰ Canadian Press, "Deep Rooted Hatred: Religion, language differences date back hundreds of years," *Ottawa Citizen*, May 15, 1993; Canadian Press, "Croatian war criminals may be entering Canada," *CTV News*, July 16, 2009, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/croatian-war-criminals-may-be-entering-canada-1.417143>.

¹¹¹ Kirk Makin, "Court rejects hostage-taker's defence," *Globe & Mail*, November 25, 2008, accessed April 2, 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/court-rejects-hostage-takers-defence/article1066657/>.

serving six years of his sentence, France released Kamel and allowed him to return to Canada. Despite repeated legal challenges, Canada has refused Kamel a passport and forbid him from leaving Canada on the grounds he presents a security risk. Officials allege that Mohamed Omary and Abdallah Ouzghar accompanied Kamel to Bosnia. Both have since faced extensive scrutiny from Canadian intelligence services. In response, Omary brought numerous lawsuits against the government alleging extraordinary rendition and lost wages owing to unfair treatment by security services. France found Ouzghar guilty in absentia for terrorism and forgery charges before Canadian authorities arrested him; after which he managed to fight extradition for eight years.¹¹²

Canadian volunteers in the former Yugoslavia present echoes of the previous two examples of foreign fighter flow. However, unlike the other two cases, Canadian public opinion has not improved concerning the motivations and conduct of these volunteers. There has been no discussion concerning their incorporation in existing veterans' organizations or memorializing on Canadian soil. Although it is possible the passage of time may yet restore the legacy of these volunteers, the savagery of the conflict and loss of Canadian soldiers may distinguish it from the earlier examples.

Conclusion

The analysis of the motivations, characteristics, and treatment of Canadian volunteers in the Spanish Civil War yields some common themes that correspond with other historical examples of Canadian foreign fighter flow. In each case, the clash of distinct ideologies motivated participants; Democracy or Communism versus Fascism (Spain), Democracy versus

¹¹² Nathaniel Kennedy, "The Maple Leaf Mujahideen: The Rise of the Canadian Jihadi Movement," Foreign Policy Research Institute, September 1, 2017, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://www.fpri.org/article/2017/09/maple-leaf-mujahideen-rise-canadian-jihadi-movement/>; Stewart Bell, *The Martyr's Oath: The Apprenticeship of a Homegrown Terrorist* (Mississauga, ON: John Wiley & Sons, 2005); Canadian Television Network (CTV), "Man linked to alleged terrorists sues government," *CTV News*, May 10, 2010, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/man-linked-to-alleged-terrorists-sues-government-1.510832>; *Hamilton Spectator*, "Ouzghar extradition fight ends," June 12, 2009, accessed March 15, 2019, <https://www.thespec.com/news-story/2253899-ouzghar-extradition-fight-ends/>.

Communism (Vietnam), and rival nationalist ideologies in the former Yugoslavia. Although there are exceptions, Canadian foreign fighters are overwhelming anglophone or allophone males, and frequently eager to demonstrate attributes typically associated with the notion of masculinity. This supports Nir Arieli's assertion the desire to affirm one's masculinity is a frequent explanation for what attracts certain individuals to take up arms in a foreign conflict.

However, as identified by Colin Gray, "the meaning and character of strategies are driven...by their contexts, all of which are constantly in play."¹¹³ With this in mind, it is important to put these observations in the context of their place in history. The recent trend of females joining the Islamic State, and the women taking up arms to combat them, reflects the increased feminization of militancy around the globe. Therefore, although the role of masculinity within the phenomenon of foreign fighter flow will likely persist, any strategy which ignores modern social realities concerning the role of women in society are likely to fail. Similarly, the operating environments of the future are likely to include clashes of ideologies not specifically identified in the above case studies. Accordingly, those framing future problems must consider the current operational environment. For example, global climate change and the resultant resource scarcity is increasingly fueling the militarism of environmentalists and those concerned with social justice.¹¹⁴

A theme present within two of the case studies was the prevalence of first and second-generation immigrants. However, as the historical proportion of the foreign-born Canadian population has been between 15-20%, with a significantly younger median age than the general population, these statistics are hardly damning. Although a telluric sense of patriotic self-defense may have extended to some recently arrived Canadians, certain other conclusions from this

¹¹³ Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 38.

¹¹⁴ Nick Buxton, "Climate change, capitalism and the military," *Ecologist*, November 15, 2018, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://theecologist.org/2018/nov/15/climate-change-capitalism-and-military>.

analysis also make immigration history a dubious characteristic of Canadian foreign fighters. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, the response to the Great Depression already resulted in immigration levels dropping from an average of 126,000 per year during the 1920s, to only 16,000 per year during the 1930s. Not only did the unprecedented curtailing of immigration fail to eliminate the pool of volunteers for the Spanish Civil War; the antecedent xenophobia contributed to a society which ostracized the remaining newcomers. Instead, understanding the primary and secondary socializations of those deemed at risk of becoming foreign fighters may assist planners in developing effective counterstrategies.¹¹⁵

In each case, the Canadian public treated those who volunteered as foreign fighters with disdain and mistrust. However, the lack of historical evidence of problems associated with the reliability of returned foreign fighters should cause planners to consider the wisdom of this approach. One alternative could be to proactively welcome returning fighters into veterans' organizations like the RCL, or if they deem that unpalatable, encourage the formation of new veterans' organizations with transparent agendas. A common trend in all three case studies of foreign fighters was the high number of individuals with prior military service. Post-WWI demographics account for the case of the Spanish Civil War; however, the other two cases demonstrated similar trends. In each case, volunteers reported feeling an overwhelming responsibility to act to shape the world for what they saw as the better. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces who felt impotent because of the current role of the military frequently resigned and went abroad to fight for causes in which they believed. A possible mitigation strategy employed by many developing nations is to give prospective foreign fighters an outlet via their

¹¹⁵ Statistics Canada, "150 years of immigration in Canada," June 29, 2016, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2016006-eng.htm>; Statistics Canada, "Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada," 2013, accessed March 11, 2019, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm>; Carl Schmitt, *The Theory of the Partisan* (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2007), 38; Richard Bedford Bennett, "Order-in-Council PC 1931-695," March 21, 1931, accessed March 11, 2019, <http://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/order-in-council-pc-1931-695-1931>.

armed forces. For example, although it has resulted in some unintended consequences, Fiji has consistently led the world in per capita troop contribution to United Nations missions. In addition to potential foreign policy advantages of this approach, it provides the government an outlet to address grievances of high unemployment and feelings of impotence. Perhaps if the Department of Defence had taken this approach during the Great Depression vice the establishment of federal relief camps, it might have removed a breeding ground for recruitment.¹¹⁶

Religion played an important role in two of the cases of foreign fighter flow examined by this paper. During the Spanish Civil War, the hold of the Catholic Church on French-Speaking Canada robbed recruiters for the Republican cause of significant support from Canada's second most populous province. Conversely, religion was a motivator for many of those who went abroad to fight in the former Yugoslavia. The modern foreign fighter phenomenon emerged as one closely identified with the concept of jihad, or the struggle against enemies of Islam. However, as the above case studies have demonstrated, no one religion has a monopoly on seeking to compel Canadians to leave the safety of Canada to wage war elsewhere. Each conflict involving Canadian foreign fighters has drawn from economically marginalized segments of the population to support or combat an insurgent element within the context of a civil war. Understanding the role of religion, and early recognition of the goals of insurgent movements, will aid planners in the development of effective counterstrategies.

The government of Canada has responded to historical examples of foreign fighter flow with a variety of measures including suspension/limitation of passports, criminalization of assembly, post-conflict detention, leveraged influence with business, varying degrees of adherence to international non-intervention agreements, and domestic legislation. These measures included the threat but rarely the application of fines or imprisonment.

¹¹⁶ Matt Siegel, "For Fiji's military rulers, U.N. peacekeeping a useful mask," *Reuters*, September 4, 2014, accessed March 17, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-fiji-un-crisis-idUSKBN0GZ0GV20140904>.

Canada's enviable geographic security means by cancelling a passport, it can effectively use the border protection services of other nations as its first line of defense. This forces Canadians who are already abroad to contact Canadian consular services in order to return. Attempts to stem the flow of foreign fighters by outlawing membership or participation in sympathetic groups has proven an ineffective countermeasure to foreign fighter flow. In some cases, it may have actually raised the enmity of some and inadvertently pushed them towards causes counter to the Canadian interest. This is not to suggest aggressive policing of active recruiting does not have a role in future strategies; however, strategies are unlikely to be successful if they fail to also address the underlying grievances of prospective volunteers. Another geographic consideration is in each of the cases, a high percentage of volunteers came from Canada's urban centers. This likely reflects the increasing urbanization and the greater likelihood of opportunities for gatherings in cities than in rural areas. By focusing strategies on these areas, planners will likely maximize the effectiveness of limited resources.

The available research material was insufficient to explore certain aspects of the lives of volunteers; however, future research into foreign fighters could expand on this study. For example, the American Medical Association recently identified a correlation between childhood abuse and military service in the post-draft era. It could be useful to explore whether this is similarly true of foreign fighters, and if so, develop mental health strategies to combat such manifestations. An increasingly global world is likely to present even more opportunities and motivations for foreign fighters; therefore, CAF planners must be prepared to develop and contribute to strategies that combat them. By understanding historical examples of this phenomenon, planners are better prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ John Vandiver, "Study: Military a Refuge for Those Exposed to Childhood Abuse," *Stars and Stripes*, July 23, 2013, accessed March 17, 2019, <https://www.stripes.com/news/study-military-a-refuge-for-those-exposed-to-childhood-abuse-1.294841>.

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