Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: From winning the war to winning the peace

Character Education

- Introduce the changing nature of preserving Canadian values post WWII
- Value the role of conflict resolution plays on the world stage
- Enrich the understanding of Canada's role in peacemaking and peacekeeping

Facts

- In 1945 Germany was defeated, had no infrastructure and lacked political and social order
- In 1945, despite wartime conferences, conflict with the Soviet Union loomed
- Canadian Forces served in Germany and Korea starting in 1950-51

Before the Reading

- List the problems that face the winner(s) and loser(s) AFTER a conflict
- What capacities do you need to make war? What capacities do you need to make and keep peace?
- The proverbs, "Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far" and "An iron fist in a velvet glove," describe approaches to making peace. What do they say about peacekeeping?

Reading

The Allies defeated Germany in the spring of 1945. It took many more years to win the type of peace for which hundreds of thousands Canadians risked and lost their lives. During that long period Canada emerged as a leading peacekeeping nation.

The need for preventative peacekeeping became apparent even before the end of WWII. During six years of war German cities and industries were levelled. The country had little infrastructure left. There were over 11 million displaced persons in Europe, the majority former inmates of

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Lyle Creelman | March, 1945 Ziekenboeg Dutch for Sick Bay UBC 117.1/114 University of British Columbia Archives | Macko Studios

Soldier of Peace, Lyle Creelman

"UNRRA must not merely do its job well; it must do it so well that it will give heart and courage to the governments who, slowly but steadily, are building up the international structure of peace …"

Lester B. Pearson

Lyle Creelman was Director of Public Health Nursing for the City of Vancouver and President of the Registered Nurses Association of British Columbia when UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, called.

At 37 years of age Creelman was appointed Chief Medical Officer for the British zone of occupied Germany. Her job was to organize nursing services to help care for millions of displaced persons (DP) of many nationalities as they awaited repatriation. The enormous task was made more difficult when displaced persons refused repatriation. Some feared the communist regimes to which they would return while

concentration camps, forced labour camps and prisoners of war (POW) camps. Many displaced persons could not or would not go back to their countries of origin fearing persecution, death or tyranny under communist regimes.

Additionally, 12 million ethnic Germans had been driven out of Poland, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. The massive population transfer of individuals, most of whom had never lived in Germany, threatened the already shaky social order of the defeated and depleted country. Since many of the returning Germans were not the same ones who left for war, the Allies had to consider what kind of Germany would emerge from the ruins. They could ill afford another world war in twenty years—the approximate gap between WWI and WWII.

Canadian Forces remained in Europe until 1946 attending to displaced persons and helping put Germany back on its feet in a way that would prevent recurrence of war. Naturally the first order of business was the displaced millions—most at death's door. Allied armies dealt with this problem until the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) took over. Many Canadian WWII veterans, such as the soldiers of the 4th Canadian Armour Division and the 96th Battery of the 5th Anti-Tank Division, who liberated Vught Concentration Camp in Holland, carried horrific images back with them to Canada.

> "There were around 500-600 live prisoners left who had been set up for execution that afternoon, but, the Canadians arrived instead so they were spared. The people were in the most horrible condition, starving to death, ill, and very badly mistreated. When the Canadians arrived they were standing around in the courtyard. Not in any barracks just standing around while the fighting was going on."1

Beyond the dealings with displaced persons, a growing threat faced the Allies in 1945–47. The post-war industrial disarmament program in Germany made a bad economic situation worse. The broader European economy was stalling. Seeing a weakened Western Europe, the Soviet Union was poised to steam roll communism over it.

"Plainfare" Short Sunderland Mk V

many Jews feared further persecution and even murder. The displaced person camps became very crowded and the risk of epidemics increased. Creelman had to use her considerable skills to organize, negotiate and educate in dire situations.

The direst situation Creelman faced was in the concentration camp Bergen-Belsen. She was in the forefront of medical care after it was liberated by the British in April 1945. RCAF trucks carrying medical supplies and food were among the first to reach the inmates barely clinging to life. Canadian war artist Alex Colville painted the scene that greeted those who entered the place of horrors. After removing the living, the British burned the camp to the ground.

Creelman constantly had to make difficult staffing and supply decisions as there just wasn't enough to satisfy the pressing needs in situations as desperate as Bergen-Belsen. In spite of these challenges, she pioneered specialized nurses' training programs in the camps under her supervision. She was acutely aware that the displaced persons would need either documentation or new learning to serve in war-torn communities to which they would return.

- Sixty Canadian nurses served with UNRRA.
- Mr. Colville described his experience at a disease-riddled Bergen-Belsen concentration camp http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/sub.cfm?source=collections/hrp/hrp_detail&media_id=639

American Secretary of State George Marshall saw the need for immediate action. The 1947 Marshall Plan pumped 12 billion US dollars into Europe to spur on economic recovery. The Berlin Crisis proved that Marshall[2] had been correct in his assessment of the situation. In 1948 as a flexing of its power, the Soviet Union cut off access to the western part of the city of Berlin. Only an Allied airlift of supplies kept the city from Soviet control. Canadian pilots participated in the ten month operation called "Plainfare" that saw 689 aircraft fly 2.3 million tons of humanitarian supplies into West Berlin.

During the Berlin Crisis, which the Soviets ended in May 1949 thanks to the success of the airlift, Canada signed on as a founding member of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. NATO was a collective security agreement that bound ten member nations to mutual support in the event of Soviet attack. NATO tasked Canadian Forces with peacekeeping responsibilities in Germany.

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Soldier of Peace, Beatrice Roberts

Canadian nurse Beatrice Roberts, a graduate of the University of Toronto's School of Nursing and Public Health, was appointed a hospital supervisor in the American occupation zone. She was responsible for the health of 6,000 displaced persons in five camps at Dillingen, Germany. She found terrible conditions especially in overcrowded nurseries. In one instance a girl dying of tuberculosis was in danger of infecting the infants. She eventually took over the supervision of Augsburg Hospital as well as the camps at Dilligen.

Roberts described difficult liaison work with the military who were screening the DPs and with the German medical staff who frequently caused terror among holocaust-scarred survivors. Nevertheless Roberts proved to be a brave soldier of peace, bringing order and hope to the post WWII scene in Europe.

- Canada was the third largest contributor of supplies for UNRRA's efforts
- Canadian diplomat Lester B. Pearson was Chairman of the UNRAA Supplies Committee

As Canada had mostly demobilized its million-plus Armed Forces personnel by 1946, it needed to expand the army again as part of new NATO and United Nations responsibilities. By November 1951 the 27th Canadian Infantry Brigade was stationed in the Hanover, Germany area as peacekeepers. By May 1951 the 25th Canadian Infantry Brigade was with United Nations forces in South Korea fighting against the communist north. Canada had an armed force of 120,000 persons in the field, its largest ever peacetime army.

With ongoing de-Nazification programs and war crime trials still dealing with the Nazi cancer that had threatened the world and Germany not yet a recovered democratic whole, the emerging communist threat had the world looking for alternative conflict resolution methods. It was too soon for full fledged war. Hopefully a big stick or a fist in a velvet glove would work—or else something new.

Canadian Forces had fought valiantly up to 1945 to secure victory. Now in what was called the Cold War, Canadians were called upon again, this time to play a leading part in making and keeping world peace.

After the Reading

- List at least three reasons why Germany was destabilized at the end of WWII
- What is the difference between a "hot" war such as WWII and the Cold War?
- Why was it important to stabilize Germany and Europe?

Extensions

- What was the biggest fear during the Cold War and how did that find its way into movies? List at least three movie titles that deal with Cold War fears or threats
- Try to find oral histories by Canadian veterans who served in the Canadian Forces between 1945 and 1946. What experiences did they have that differ from veterans who were demobilized earlier?
- Present a written or an oral blurb to your class about Canada's role in the founding and development of NATO or the United Nations

Sources

- Armstrong-Reid, Susan and David Murray *Armies of Peace: Canada and the UNRRA Years,* Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008
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- Doherty, Muriel Knox *Letters from Belsen 1945: An Australian nurse's experiences with the survivors of war,* Allen and Unwin, 2000
- Hulme, Kathryn *The Wild Place,* Pocket Books, 1960 (available online)

Ontario Historical Society Connection

Dr. Armstrong-Reid, OHS Guelph ~ Dr. Lyle M. Creelman

1 Vincent Chatel and Chuck Ferree The Forgotten Camp, www.jewishgen.org/ForgottenCamps/Witnesses/MainWitnEng.html

2 George C. Marshall was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953 for his creation of the European recovery plan called the Marshall Plan. He was the only US Army General ever to receive this honour.