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**GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY, MUTINY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY
IN THE POSTWAR ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY:
THE CRUISE OF
HMCS *CRESCENT* TO CHINA, 1949**

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Résumé (abrégé)

Cette dissertation présente la croisière du NCSM *Crescent* en Chine comme une étude de cas sur la tentative de revendication d'une identité nationale par un pays qui tente de laisser sa marque dans le monde entier, alors que sa politique étrangère et ses institutions militaires n'en sont encore qu'aux premiers stades de développement. Pendant son séjour en Chine, le *Crescent* a vécu des actes de mutinerie qui ont donné lieu à la tenue d'une commission d'enquête présidée par le contre-amiral Mainguy. Parallèlement, le *Crescent* a été le seul navire opérationnel déployé par la Marine royale du Canada (MRC) entre la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et le début de la guerre de Corée. Cette dissertation explore la relation entre deux questions fondamentales : comment la menace pressentie de désordres disciplinaires au sein de toute la flotte s'est-elle concrétisée? et, que faisait un navire canadien sur le fleuve Yangtze au beau milieu de la guerre civile chinoise?

Résumé (détaillé)

Le 15 mars 1949, le NCSM *Crescent*, accosté à Nankin, en Chine, a été l'un des trois navires de la Marine royale canadienne (MRC) à vivre des « actes de mutinerie » en l'espace de trois semaines. La commission d'enquête chargée de faire la lumière sur ces incidents n'a relevé aucun élément subversif; cependant, même si le Rapport Mainguy a examiné la mythologie de la MRC, il n'en demeure pas moins que nous ne saisissons pas clairement les causes de ces mutineries.

Cette dissertation explore la relation entre deux questions fondamentales : comment la menace pressentie de désordres disciplinaires au sein de toute la flotte s'est-elle concrétisée? et, que faisait un navire canadien sur le fleuve Yangtze au beau milieu de la guerre civile chinoise? On suppose que la croisière du NCSM *Crescent* en Chine peut constituer une étude de cas sur la tentative de revendication d'une identité nationale par un pays qui tente de laisser sa marque dans le monde entier, alors que sa politique étrangère et ses institutions militaires n'en sont encore qu'aux premiers stades de développement.

On se base sur divers dossiers d'archives pour présenter une perspective « ascendante » originale des politiques diplomatiques et maritimes du Canada. Le *Crescent* a été le seul navire opérationnel déployé par la MRC entre la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et le début de la guerre de Corée. Cette croisière a aussi été la première initiative dans le cadre de la politique étrangère indépendante du nouveau ministère interventionniste de Louis St-Laurent et Lester Pearson. Mais, même s'il n'y a eu qu'une, cette croisière demeure représentative de l'expérience canadienne dans le domaine de la diplomatie de la canonnière. D'autre part, bien que les mauvaises conditions de service décrites dans le Rapport Mainguy aient été à l'origine des désordres, une analyse sociale du *Crescent* révèle que bon nombre de ces conditions avaient déjà été corrigées. Les incidents de 1949 ont été des événements isolés et non symptomatiques de l'insatisfaction générale qui en fait régnait deux ans auparavant.

Abstract (short)

This dissertation presents the cruise of HMCS *Crescent* to China as a case study in the challenges to national identity faced by a country trying to make its mark internationally when its foreign policy and military establishments are still both in the early stages of development. While in China, *Crescent* suffered one of the mutinies which provoked the seminal commission of inquiry chaired by Rear-Admiral Mainguy. At the same time, her despatch was the only operational cruise undertaken by the RCN between the end of the Second World War and the outbreak of the Korean conflict. This dissertation explores the inter-relationship of two fundamental questions: how did the perceived threat of a fleetwide breakdown in discipline come to pass?, and, what was a Canadian warship doing up the Yangtze River in the middle of the Chinese Civil War?

Abstract (long)

On 15 March 1949, HMCS *Crescent* was alongside in Nanking, China when she became one of three ships of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) to suffer a mutinous “incident” within the space of three weeks. The subsequent commission of inquiry found no subversive elements, but even as The Mainguy Report has entered the mythology of the RCN our understanding of the mutinies remains incomplete.

This dissertation explores the inter-relationship of two fundamental questions: how did the perceived threat of a fleetwide breakdown in discipline come to pass?, and, what was a Canadian warship doing up the Yangtze River in the middle of the Chinese Civil War? The hypothesis is that the cruise of HMCS *Crescent* to China can be seen as a case study in the challenges to national identity faced by a country trying to make its mark internationally when its foreign policy and military establishments are still both in the early stages of development.

A wide variety of primary records is used to present an original “from the bottom up” perspective into Canadian diplomatic and naval policies. *Crescent*’s despatch to China was the only operational cruise undertaken by the RCN between the end of the Second World War and the outbreak of the Korean conflict. It was also the first independent foreign policy initiative of the new, interventionist ministry of Louis St Laurent and Lester Pearson. Yet, even in this uniqueness, the cruise remains representative of the Canadian experience with gunboat diplomacy. On another level, while the generally poor state of service conditions described in The Mainguy Report were contributing factors to unrest, a social analysis of *Crescent* reveals that many of them were already being addressed. The incidents of 1949 were discreet events and not symptomatic of the widespread discontent which indeed had existed two years earlier.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has benefitted from numerous influences over the course of its fifteen year gestation. It probably would have had to wait another decade had it not been for my friend, Jean-Pierre Gagnon, from the Service historique at the National Defence Headquarters. He convinced me finally to take the plunge and apply for the doctoral programme at Université Laval. Professeur Richard Jones bravely took me on, sight unseen, and has provided a steady hand on the tiller throughout, guiding me unflinchingly to completion with just the right combination of push and patience.

Pursuing postgraduate studies while holding regular employment is a daunting proposition, and my ambition was made much easier by the support of several individuals who saw enough value in my work to lend it a measure of official sanction. Captain Dan McNeil of the Maritime Staff took interest at a critical juncture. Bonnie Petzinger taught me in the intricacies of the *Access to Information and Privacy Acts*, which informed significant elements of my research and presentation of personal information. For much of the past decade I have found an intellectual home in the Directorate of History of Heritage (DHH), and for this I must credit the atmosphere fostered by Alec Douglas and continued under Serge Bernier. It is difficult to find the words to express my appreciation for the advice and counsel of Roger Sarty, latterly of the Directorate and presently with the Canadian War Museum.

Other friends and colleagues from DHH, the Maritime Staff, and the Directorate of Access to Information and Privacy have all touched my life and added materially to the progress of this dissertation. At the risk of leaving anyone unnoticed, I shall attempt to list them: Bob Caldwell, Doug McLean, Mike Whitby, Bill Glover, Isabel Campbell, Jean Morin, Mike McNorgan, Paul Lansey, Ken Reynolds, Norm Jolin, Paul Massel, Sandra Begg, and John Clearwater. A number of other persons made available, in addition to their friendship, papers describing the results of their own research: Al English, Chris Bell, Ty Pile, Jan Drent, John Roach, and Wilf Lund. Without exception, each and every person who agreed to be interviewed about obscure events a half-century past did so most graciously, many inviting me into their homes. The full list is provided in the bibliography, but at the risk of embarrassing them, I must single out Jack and Nevitt Menzies, Vernon Howland, and Pat Nixon. The unstinting hospitality of Jim and Betty Tyre underscored just how small a family is the Canadian Navy: their son David was Yeoman of Signals when I was Communications Officer in HMCS Gatineau for the cruise to Shanghai in 1983 upon which this dissertation was conceived.

Over the years of my research, I have enjoyed the assistance of several rotations of staff in the viewing room of the National Archives of Canada. My time at the Public Records Office at Kew was necessarily shorter, but the staff there performed with unparalleled efficiency. I am particularly grateful to Larry McNally of the NAC for making the Audette Papers available, and to Corporal John Bradley of the Canadian Forces Photographic Unit. I am indebted once again to Bill Constable for the clarity of his mapwork.

Finally, but not least, I must acknowledge the support of my family. The constant interest of my parents and in-laws, the indulgence of my daughters Meaghan and Beth ("What does Daddy *do* with the computer in the basement?"), and the unquestioned love of my wife Muriel have kept my determination in focus.

Acronyms

ACNP	- Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel
ACNS	- Assistant Chief of Naval Staff
A/S	- anti-submarine [warfare]
ASW	- anti-submarine warfare
CANAVHED	- Canadian Naval Headquarters [message identifier for NSHQ]
CANGEN	- Canadian Forces General message [for service-wide distribution]
CAS	- Chief of the Air Staff
CCP	- Chinese Communist Party
CDC	- Cabinet Defence Committee
CFPU	- Canadian Forces Photographic Unit
CFR	- commissioned from the ranks
CGS	- Canadian Government Ship
CGS	- Chief of the General Staff
CinC	- Commander-in-Chief
CNP	- Chief of Naval Personnel
CNS	- Chief of the Naval Staff
CO	- Commanding Officer
COAC	- Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast [changed to FOAC, 1 January 1948]
COPC	- Command Officer Pacific Coast [changed to FOPC, 1 January 1948]
CPO[1 / 2]	- Chief Petty Officer [1 st Class / 2 nd Class]
CSU	- Canadian Seaman's Union
(D)	- (Destroyers) [ie. Captain or Commodore of]
DCER	- Documents on Canadian External Relations
DCNP	- Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel
DDE	- destroyer escort
DEA	- Department of External Affairs
DM	- Deputy Minister
DND	- Department of National Defence
DEP	- Director of Engineering Personnel
DHH	- Directorate of History and Heritage
DNR	- Director of Naval Reserves
DoP	- Director of Plans
DPSD	- Director of Plans and Signals Division
(E)	- officer, Engineering branch
ERA	- Engine Room Artificer
FES	- [Royal Navy] Far East Station
FPS	- Fisheries Protection Service
FOAC	- Flag Officer Atlantic Coast
FOPC	- Flag Officer Pacific Coast
HA	- high angle [gun]

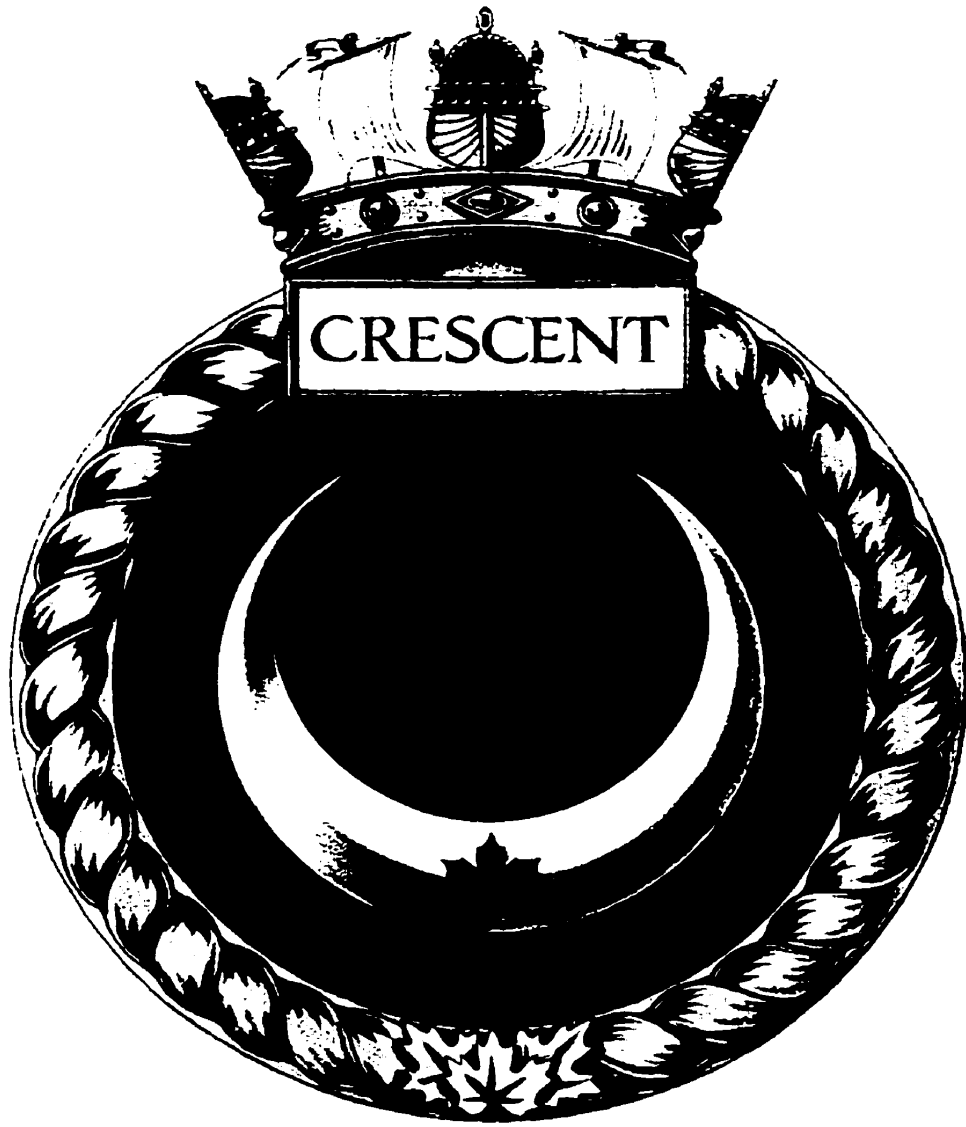
HMAS	- His (Her) Majesty's Australian Ship
HMCS	- His (Her) Majesty's Canadian Ship
HMS	- His (Her) Majesty's Ship
HMSO	- Her (His) Majesty's Stationary Office
KMT	- Kuomintang [Nationalist Chinese]
(L)	- officer, Electrical branch
LA	- low angle [gun]
MND	- Minister of National Defence
NAC	- National Archives of Canada
NATO	- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NHS	- Naval Historical Section file number indicator
NSHQ	- Naval Staff Headquarters
NSS	- Naval Staff correspondence file number indicator
PHP	- Post-Hostilities Planning [Committee]
PJBD	- Permanent Joint Board on Defence
PMC	- Personnel Members Committee
PO[1 / 2]	- Petty Officer [1 st Class / 2 nd Class]
PPC	- Post-war Planning Committee
PRC	- Personnel Records Centre [Canada, NAC]
PRO	- Public Records Office [Great Britain]
QF	- quick-firing [gun]
RAN	- Royal Australian Navy
RCAF	- Royal Canadian Air Force
RCMP	- Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RCN	- Royal Canadian Navy
RCNC	- Royal Canadian Naval College (HMCS <i>Royal Roads</i>)
RCNR	- Royal Canadian Naval Reserve
RCNVR	- Royal Canadian Navy Volunteer Reserve
ret'd	- retired
RN	- Royal Navy
RNCC	- Royal Naval College of Canada
RNVR	- Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
RNZN	- Royal New Zealand Navy
RRMC	- Royal Roads Military College (earlier, HMCS <i>Royal Roads</i>)
(S)	- officer, Supply Branch
(SB)	- officer, Special Branch
SCAP	- Supreme Commander Allied Powers [in Japan]
SNLR	- Services No Longer Required
SO	- Staff Officer
SSEA	- Secretary of State for External Affairs
(T)	- (Torpedo) [specialty]
(TAS)	- (Torpedo and Anti/Submarine) [specialty]
U of T	- University of Toronto [Press]

UN[SC]	- United Nations [Security Council]
UNTD	- University Naval Training Division[s]
US[A]	- United States [of America]
USN	- United States Navy
USS	- United States Ship
VCNS	- Vice Chief of Naval Staff
VE-Day	- Victory in Europe Day, celebrated 8 May 1945
VJ-Day	- Victory over Japan Day, celebrated 15 August 1945
VR	- see RCNVR
WRCNS	- Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service
XO	- Executive Officer [ie, second-in-command of a warship]

There can be no doubt that the sea takes from the sailors something intangible and gives it to the ship herself - and that something intangible is her soul. Heretical as it may seem, ships do have souls, personalities of their own, and because of this, they inspire a very real love which no landsmen will ever understand...

Louis de la Chesnaye Audette
Commander, RCNVR (ret'd)¹

¹ National Archives of Canada [NAC], MG 31, E18, Louis de la Chesnaye Audette Papers, volume 16-5, "Notes for speech to the Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, at St Jean d'Iberville [Québec], October 21st, 1977."



Chapter 1 - Introduction and Hypothesis

The Ides of March, 1949, found His Majesty's Canadian Ship (HMCS) *Crescent* moored to a rain swept jetty on the Yangtze River at Nanking, China. Communist troops on the north bank were poised to begin their final invasion of the south, and the destroyer had been despatched by the Canadian government so that "if an emergency arose out of disturbed conditions in the Far East, the *Crescent* would be available to assist in the evacuation of Canadian citizens."¹ The ship had arrived in the Nationalist Chinese capital four days before, and now, having relieved the Royal Navy destroyer HMS *Cossack*, the 14 officers and 187 men in *Crescent* were standing by to bolster the spirits of the remaining members of the Commonwealth diplomatic community. Just after "colours" that morning, at 08:05 the routine order "*Out pipes*", signalling the ship's company to fall in and carry on with departmental work, was met by a most non-routine response: 83 men, ranked leading seaman and below, "remained in [the] fore upper messdeck behind locked doors",² refusing to come out until their collective grievances had been heard by the captain. Mass protest could not be sanctioned, but Lieutenant-Commander David Groos did agree to hear individual "requests". His calm intervention defused the situation and within two hours the hands returned to work.

¹ NAC. RG 25, vol 3394, file [DEA] 366-H-40, "Visit of HMCS CRESCENT to the Far East," RCN Press Release, 28 January 1949.

² NAC. RG 24, vol 8402, HMCS *Crescent*, Ship's Log, 15 March 1949.

In reporting the incident to Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) in Ottawa, Groos felt it was an isolated event,³ but to the senior officers of the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) it was a stab through the heart - “a similar incident [had] occurred in [the destroyer] *Athabaskan* on 26th February at Manzanillo”⁴ involving 90 junior ratings. Alongside in Nanking, *Crescent*'s sailors were unaware of the previous incident, but news was now spreading through the fleet. Within days, on 20 March, 32 aircraft handlers in the carrier *Magnificent* briefly refused to turn to morning cleaning stations as ordered.

Something evidently was wrong in the Canadian fleet. Since the sailors had offered no hint of violence, no one used the charged word “mutiny”. But the “incidents”, as they came to be called, had transpired in suspiciously rapid succession. A communist-inspired strike in the Canadian merchant marine in 1948 sparked fears of subversion in the naval service, and Brooke Claxton, the Liberal Minister of National Defence, ordered a commission of inquiry to investigate the state of the Navy.

The resulting Mainguy Report⁵ found no organized or subversive influences. Its candour in laying bare many of the problems in general naval service conditions is nonetheless remarkable, and it is rightly considered a watershed in the development of the

³ Audette Papers, *Crescent* to NSHQ, 152205Z/March/1949.

⁴ *Ibid.*, NSHQ to *Crescent*, 162320Z/March/1949.

⁵ Report on certain “Incidents” which occurred on board H.M.C. Ships ATHABASKAN, CRESCENT and MAGNIFICENT and on other matters concerning the Royal Canadian Navy / Rapport sur certains “incidents” survenus à bord de L’ATHABASKAN, du CRESCENT et du MAGNIFICENT et sur d’autres questions relatives à la Marine royale canadienne [hereafter cited as The Mainguy Report] (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1949). The report was named for its chairman, Rear-Admiral E. Rollo Mainguy, Flag Officer Atlantic Coast (FOAC).

modern Canadian Navy. The Navy is determined that such instances of mass insubordination will never be repeated. To this day, all candidates who pass through the Naval Officers Training Centre in Esquimalt, British Columbia undertake as part of their basic coursework an exploration of the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Mainguy Commission. Much as the events of 1949 have become firmly embedded in the mythology of the RCN, however, our understanding of the mutinies remains incomplete. The Navy's postwar morale problems tend to be ascribed to the inattention of an uncaring officer corps. Such a simplistic explanation does not adequately answer the question: how did such a state of affairs come to pass? Another, equally fundamental, question has never been addressed: what was a Canadian warship doing up the Yangtze River in 1949?

Gunboat diplomacy and mutiny - these are words not normally associated with the Royal Canadian Navy. Why have they been excluded from our language, when there is evidence of their occurrence at different points in Canadian history? Looking beyond the Navy for examples only confirms the event-denial cycle: cases in point are the despatch of troops to Siberia in 1919, and the mutinies of the Canadian Army at Terrace, BC in 1944.

The reasons why signal events such as these remain neglected aspects of Canadian history forms an essential core of this dissertation. The most obvious is the tendency of people and institutions to repress subjects which are inherently embarrassing. Gunboat diplomacy conjures images of imperial adventuring which are uncomfortable for Canadians, who prefer to style themselves as an unmilitary people. Mutiny implies failings which could cause domestic and foreign observers to question the reliability of

institutions and the credibility of their leadership. That the concepts of gunboat diplomacy and mutiny form part of Canada's experience points to troubling contradictions in our self-image as a democratic people, with no promise of easy resolution.

The instinct to ignore is compounded by the more subtle process of the way in which institutional memory is organized. This is a more fundamental issue than it might appear at first glance. The archives of national institutions are enormous - tens of thousands of boxes of material - and the subject headings officials used in creating these documents play an essential role in guiding any research inquiry. The influence of those subject headings is all the more profound because of the very nature of large institutions and the manner in which they carry out their work - or more properly, cope with the never ending complexity of day to day events. The whole purpose of a modern bureaucracy is to create clarity for the leadership, both in setting new directions and in responding to existing situations. Moreover, scholars, for that very reason, tend to favour documents from the most senior offices, because they pull together the detail, and treat issues broadly. By their episodic nature, however, incidents such as those under discussion here tend not to be recorded under subject file headings of "mutiny" or "gunboat diplomacy".

When investigators venture below the level of high policy, they must of necessity be extremely specific, dealing with particular events. In the case of the navy, the basic records are ships' logs and reports of proceedings. These very technical documents are in themselves challenging to use. They assume a great deal of knowledge, and report very specific events in terse, almost telegraphic, statements. At this level, it is therefore all the

more difficult to take the longer view, fully to understand the critically important context. Yet it is at this level that context is most important for, again in the case of the navy, the performance of a warship in a particular situation is largely determined by the efficiency and morale of the crew, a highly specialized community of individuals. By failing to study, not only closely but broadly, what was actually transpiring at the unit level - the events which first provoked, or which occurred in reaction to, the policy directives - our histories inevitably fall victim to the charge most commonly levelled at a headquarters: they are out of touch with the waterfront.

The immediate postwar years are a poorly understood period in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy precisely because of this failure to appreciate what was happening in the ships of the fleet. The Mainguy Report, our marker for the postwar Navy, is upheld as an exposition of what was wrong as compiled from the voices of the sailors themselves. Yet, many of its findings and conclusions are not supported by a careful reading of *Crescent's* unit level experiences. Thus, the Commission's report was itself nothing more than the first high level postwar policy analysis. Having established the framework for subsequent studies, it has been modified by them only in detail. The apparent closure it has offered to this sorry chapter is one which we have been too willing to accept. Moreover, the commission took no account of the fact that *Crescent's* mission in China was one of gunboat diplomacy. That oversight has been continued even by historians of Canadian external relations. Perhaps that is not surprising, as the record of her cruise was filed under the innocuous title, "The Visit of HMCS *Crescent* to China".⁶

⁶ DEA 366-H-40, *op. cit.*

Crescent's experience of March 1949 constitutes a linkage of Canada's experience of gunboat diplomacy and mutiny. This begs the question: what led to their coming together on that rain swept jetty in Nanking? It will be seen that common to both concepts were notions of national identity. The Canadian foreign policy establishment was looking for an increased presence on the world stage, to be defined in part by the involvement of national armed forces. Underlying the deliberations of the Mainguy Commission was a belief that the Navy's problems arose from inadequate national identity and a failure to fully reflect Canadian society. At the same time, the upheavals of postwar retrenchment were themselves forcing the Navy, along with the other services, to re-define their place as national institutions.

The hypothesis of this dissertation, therefore, is that the cruise of HMCS *Crescent* to China in 1949 can be seen as a case study in the challenges to national identity faced by a country trying to make its mark internationally when its foreign policy and military establishments are still both in the early stages of development. On the military side, in particular, there was not yet the infrastructure (cultural and intellectual as well as material), to sustain the more nationalist thrust that the government had initiated. This political penchant to see more national identity as the solution, however, came without the requisite financial and moral support, until the naval incidents of early 1949. The Mainguy Commission provided the impetus to overcome the difficulties, but in a fashion not previously recognized: senior naval officers already had determined the road to recovery; many were offended by the tone of The Mainguy Report, but now, with their

requirements described in the language of national identity, the government could no longer ignore their pleas.

Chapter Two in the present dissertation will describe the state of the relevant historiography and the methodological approach. Chapter Three will explore the genesis of the mission to China in the context of the evolving foreign policy of the postwar Liberal ministries, and then set that against the generally misunderstood development of a distinctly Canadian concept of a “balanced fleet”. Chapter Four will study the facts of the mission as it unfolded. In Chapter Five, an analysis of the “society” of this RCN destroyer will challenge the accepted stereotype of Canadian naval identity. Chapter Six will examine the Canadian experience of mutiny up to the climactic summer of 1947, setting the scene for a new explanation, in Chapter Seven, of the incidents of 1949. Finally, the Conclusion will assess the impact of *Crescent*’s experience, and its meaning for our understanding of this critical moment in the history of the Royal Canadian Navy.

For all the apparent uniqueness of the cruise to China, *Crescent* was typical of the fleet in which she served. Her mission, if performed by any other Canadian warship at that time, most likely would have had similar results. In offering an original “from the bottom up” perspective, her story provides the context for a new reading of the efforts of the RCN to restructure itself in the face of postwar retrenchment so as to meet the uncertain demands of an emerging Cold War. *Crescent* was ordained to be, in every sense of the word, the vessel for this voyage of discovery.

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The story of HMCS *Crescent*, true to the image of the new moon from which she took her name, presents a partial reflection of a greater whole. The record of the 25 years of service of this ship parallels to a remarkable degree the waxing and waning fortunes of the Royal Canadian Navy through the years 1945-1970. The details of *Crescent's* acquisition, employment and ultimate disposition will be discussed at length over the course of the following chapters, but a brief reprise of her service is necessary at this point.

Crescent took form, appropriately enough, in the Royal Navy (RN). Her keel was laid on 16 August 1943, at the Clydebank, Scotland shipyard of Messers John Brown & Co.⁷ as "one of eight being built for the Admiralty which together would form a flotilla of intermediate-sized destroyers".⁸ The Royal Navy practice of ordering destroyers in

⁷ M.J. Whitley, Destroyers of World War Two: An International Encyclopedia (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1988), p. 137. The official DHH, 8000-G.P., "Brief History of HMCS *Crescent*", Naval Historical Section, 27 May 1958, p. 1, gives the date as only "September 1943."

There is no single comprehensive reference on British destroyers of the Second World War, and this dissertation makes use of three: Whitley, *op. cit.*; Maurice Cocker, Destroyers of the Royal Navy, 1893-1981 (London: Ian Allen, 1981); and, Edgar J. March, British Destroyers, 1899-1960 (London: Seeley, 1966).

Comparative vessel size is usually expressed in tonnage, although this is the factor of greatest inconsistency amongst the texts. The Admiralty Manual of Seamanship, Volume I [BR 61(1)] (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office [HMSO], 1964), p. 14, observes that "tonnage can be measured in a variety of ways." The most common method for warships is *displacement*, defined as "the actual weight of the vessel represented by the number of tons of water she displaces when loaded with fuel, water, stores and crew on board." This would seem to imply weight in a fully loaded condition, but certain texts refer to "light" displacement. Unless otherwise indicated, this dissertation uses full-load displacement, in British (vice metric) units.

⁸ "Brief History of HMCS *Crescent*," p. 1.

groups of eight, identifying each new class by the next letter of the alphabet, and giving all ships of a class names beginning with that letter, was formalized in 1928 with the building of the *Ardent*, or “A”-class. Having progressed through the alphabet by 1942, four groups of vessels ordered later in that year were labelled collectively as the “C”-class, with each sub-set of eight identified as “Ca”, “Ch”, “Co”, and “Cr”. *Crescent* was the lead ship of the “Cr”-class, the 14th and last group of British destroyers built during the war and designated

“Emergency Flotillas” (see **Figure 1**). Fulfilling a role initially described as “intermediate”, these emergency ships were very much a product of the war. In the mid-1930s, British destroyer design had been



Figure 1: *Crescent* nearing completion in the summer of 1945 (NAC, negative S-4039).

gravitating to increasing specialization. The big

“fleet” destroyers of the *Tribal*-class, at 2,520-tons and with eight 4.7 inch low angle (LA) guns (arranged in four twin or “4 X II” mountings), were ideal for anti-surface operations and were described as “pocket cruisers,” in clear analogy to the small but heavily-armed “pocket battleships” of the German Navy they were designed to operate

against.⁹ At the other end of the scale was the 1,600-ton anti-aircraft *Hunt*-class, armed with six 4-inch (3 X II) quick-firing high-angle (QF HA) guns.¹⁰ The intermediates were conceived when war broke out in September 1939 and the Admiralty determined a pressing need for large numbers of vessels which could be produced quickly to perform the traditional “general” destroyer duties. The ships of the 1st Emergency Flotilla, the 2,200-ton “O”-class, and their follow-ons retained a mix of gun and torpedo armament while also taking account of the renewed importance of an anti-submarine capability. All the emergency flotilla ships in fact were merely incremental improvements on the “J”-class, one of the last pre-war designs and itself a scaled-down *Tribal*, retaining the general graceful lines of that class (the external identifying features of the “J” were a single funnel and single guns in the mountings).¹¹ However, the weight of wartime progress in weapon and equipment design was reflected quite literally in *Crescent*, such that at 2,560-tons full load displacement she actually was slightly larger than a *Tribal*. Although the main gun armament remained half that of the *Tribals*, with four 4.5-inch (1 X I) QF HA/LA guns, from a hasty, stop-gap premise, the emergency ships had come to enjoy status as full-fledged fleet units.

⁹ Michael Whitby, “Instruments of Security: The Royal Canadian Navy’s Procurement of the Tribal-Class Destroyers, 1938-1943,” in The Northern Mariner / Le Marin du nord, vol II, no 3 (July 1992), pp. 1-2.

¹⁰ Whitley, *passim*., and Cocker, *passim*.

¹¹ Refer to **Figure 5** for more comparative details on destroyer classes, and Appendix 1-1 for silhouettes (not exactly to scale) of classes of ships.

As one study has noted, these emergency ships “were constructed with [a view to] war worthiness first and outward appearances second, yet despite this condition they were a very handsome type and their performance was second to none.”¹² They were built with the singular expectation of delivering fatal blows to the enemy, and in the equally realistic anticipation that their own existence might be measured in months. As such, the watchwords of wartime construction were economy and speed of building. Austerity measures included replacing high strength but labour intensive rivetting with all-welded construction, and use of cheap but bulky lead electrical cabling in lieu of copper. Habitability had never been high among Royal Navy destroyer design priorities, and now congestion was compounded by the installation of equipment to support new technology (such as radar and sonar) in any available spaces - invariably in the mess decks - and then of additional lockers for the new ratings required to look after the added machinery. Even adhering to the less exacting wartime building standards, destroyer construction took 18-24 months. *Crescent* and her sisters - *Crusader*, *Creole*, *Crispin*, *Cromwell*, *Crown*, *Crystal*, and *Crozier* - could not be launched before the summer of 1945. While they were being built, Allied fortunes of war improved dramatically, leading to a change in their planned theatre of employment, from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. No efforts were made to “tropicalize” the ships with the addition of such amenities as air conditioning plants, but extra oil fuel tanks were fitted in anticipation of the extended ranges at which fleet operations would be conducted in that theatre.

¹² Cocker, p. 89.

It was also while they were building that *Crescent's* fortunes came to be tied to those of the Royal Canadian Navy. At about the same time as the ship's keel was being laid, the circumstances surrounding the first Quebec Conference in August 1943 provided the opportunity and the conditions for the proper establishment of the RCN as a balanced force. Until that point, the service had remained almost exclusively a small-ship navy. Now, with the turning of the tide in the European theatre, the higher Allied direction of the war shifted its attention to the defeat of Imperial Japan, and Canadian naval planners adopted the complimentary policy objectives that the RCN should play an effective role in the Pacific war, and that the service should end the war with a well-balanced fleet that would be useful to meet a wide range of postwar contingencies.¹³ Over the course of the next two years, the plans went through several variations, but always with the intention that the postwar RCN should consist of two fleet units, one for each coast, and each comprised of one aircraft carrier, two cruisers and a destroyer flotilla, and together constituting some 20,000 men. After December 1943, the Canadian and British staffs agreed in principle that one of those flotillas would be the entire *Crescent* class.

With the unexpected end of the war in August 1945, the government imposed an interim establishment level of 10,000 men. The Navy's planning for a balanced force was thrown into disarray. *Crescent* and her sister *Crusader* were about to be commissioned and the government allowed their acquisition on loan from the Royal Navy, but cancelled the transfer of the remainder of the class. The mixed British-Canadian heritage of the

¹³ DHH, NHS 1650-1, vol 3, Plans Division, "Post-War Navy," 20 August 1943; and, 1650-1, vol 1, "RCN Ship Requirements for the War Against Japan," 9 September 1943.

RCN was epitomized by the fact that the status of these two vessels was not clarified until their purchase by Canada in 1951. In the meantime, in the winter of 1945-46, their differing fates were representative of the rest of the vast Canadian war fleet: *Crusader* was almost immediately paid off into reserve, while *Crescent* went to the west coast for training duties (see **Figure 2**). In that capacity, she was the only Canadian ship in

continuous commission from the end of the Second World War until after the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949. At one point,

she was one of only four ships in service, and her

despatch to China was the only operational cruise undertaken by the RCN in the period before the Korean war.

Four years of practically non-stop service, however, exacted their toll on *Crescent's* austerity-built hull. As the Mainguy Commission undertook the deliberations which would revitalize the RCN, plans already were afoot for *Crescent* to be paid off into reserve in December 1949. Her crew were transferred *en masse* to the "V"-class destroyer *Sioux* which, although of similar vintage, had been in reserve since the end of the war, and had just been modernized to trial new habitability standards of bunks and

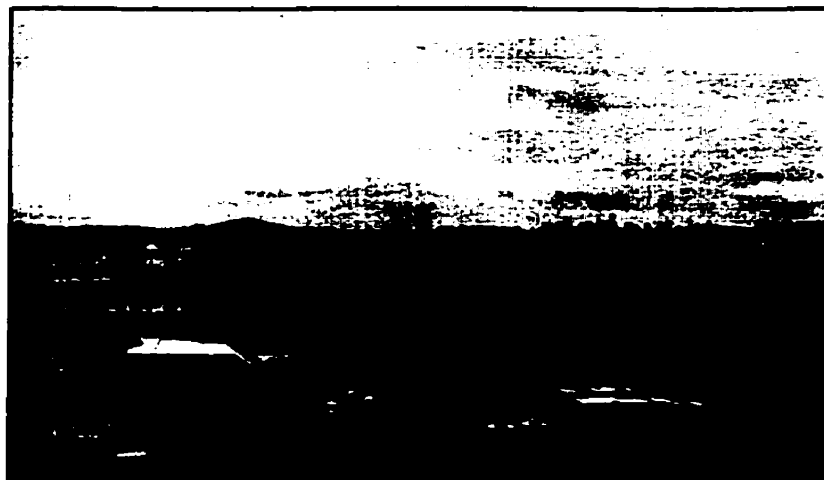


Figure 2: *Crescent* in Esquimalt Harbour, viewed over the after turret of *Sioux*, 1946 (NAC, negative F-4706).

cafeteria-style messing. *Crescent's* reprieve, like that of the RCN, was short-lived. Just a year after their return from China, a large part of her crew found themselves returning to the Far East in *Sioux*, which was one of the first three RCN destroyers despatched to Korea in July 1950. Meanwhile, the Canadian commitment to keep three destroyers in Korean waters required the active employment of every available ship. *Crescent* was re-commissioned in September 1950 and transferred to the East Coast for training duties.

While Korea posed a taxing diversion, NATO proved the salvation of the balanced fleet concept. Motivating the negotiators of the Atlantic Alliance in part were intelligence reports that the Soviet Union was mass-producing a new generation of high-speed submarines. Carrier-borne aviation provided part of the response, but no single ship in the Canadian fleet - indeed, few in the Allied inventory - had the combination of speed and weapons to meet the Soviet challenge. Sketches of a new class of sophisticated, Canadian-designed anti-submarine escort destroyers were completed in May 1949 and unveiled in the RCN magazine, Crowsnest, that August.¹⁴ but it would be another six years before the commissioning of the lead ship, HMCS *St Laurent*. While the new ships were building, *Crescent* was one of two ships (the other was *Sioux's* sister ship, *Algonquin*) taken in hand to be stripped down and virtually rebuilt to act as prototypes for the new ships. *Crescent's* metamorphosis and re-commissioning on 31 October 1955, two days after *St Laurent* entered the fleet, was highly symbolic of the transformation of the RCN, as the service entered the golden years of its existence in the decade leading up to unification of the armed forces in the mid-1960s (see **Figure 3**).

¹⁴ Crowsnest: The Royal Canadian Navy's Magazine, vol 1, no 10 (August 1949), p. 21.

In her new guise,
Crescent lived out the
remainder of her service in
the role for which she
originally had been
designed - as a flotilla
leader, the senior ship of
the Second Canadian
Escort Squadron, based at
Esquimalt. Her final

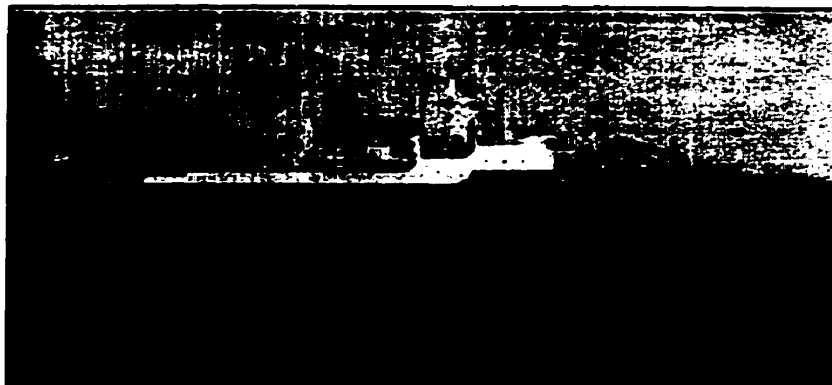


Figure 3: [Original caption:] “HMCS *Crescent*, a fleet destroyer completed in Britain just after the Second World War, has recently been extensively modernized. The change in her silhouette is indicated by the white line in her superstructure in [the] photo.... Reclassified as a destroyer escort, ... her armament includes three-inch guns of a high rate of fire, anti-submarine mortars and anti-aircraft weapons” (NAC, negative E-33772).

disposal came in April 1970, three short months before the scrapping of the last carrier, *Bonaventure*, as the Canadian naval service reached yet another postwar nadir.

Chapter 2 - Reflections on a Theme

If our understanding of what befell the RCN between the end of the Second World War and the outbreak of the Korean conflict is incomplete, it is due in part to the tendency of scholars of most aspects of Canadian history to gloss over this period. The years 1945-1950, if not overlooked entirely, are frequently relegated only a few lines.

Certainly, the half-decade was unmarked by any truly defining moments. The rapid reintegration of veterans into society, much smoother than at the end of the Great War, is generally accepted to have presaged the unprecedented era of growth and prosperity which continued until the 1970s. Perhaps because of the ultimate success of the transition, it has only recently become the subject of detailed analysis.¹ In fact, the shift in production from the war economy to the consumers' paradise of the "baby boom" generation got off to a lurching start, as economic output declined in each of 1945 and 1946, and consumption momentarily fell in 1948. The years 1946 and 1947 witnessed the largest per capita number of man-days lost to strike action in the history of the

¹ Peter Neary and Jack Granatstein, The Veterans' Charter: Postwar Canada (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), *passim*.

Dominion.² In their examination of Canada since 1945, Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English tellingly entitled their opening part “Patterns of Change.”³

The global perspective is little different. For many years, hindsight has provided a model of world history where there was a rapid and inevitable transition from unconditional victory over the Axis Powers through a brief period of flux to the bipolar stability of the Cold War, policed by the two nuclear superpowers and their respective NATO and Warsaw Pact allies. But in early 1949 this emerging stability was not apparent. The Soviet Union had yet to explode an atomic bomb and the lines demarcating spheres of influence in Europe were still being drawn. The Czechoslovak Coup was a recent memory, the Soviets continued to occupy a large portion of Austria, and the Berlin Blockade and Airlift were in full motion. Intelligence assessments predicted a new war in Europe within three to five years, although the real fear was the piecemeal absorption of war-weary Western Europe into the communist orbit. A primary interest of policy-makers and military men in the West was to balance somehow the competing American tendencies towards either isolationism or superpower unilateralism, and draw a reluctant United States into the emerging Atlantic Alliance. Recent

² F.H. Leacy (ed), Historical Statistics of Canada (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1983 [2nd ed]). series D124-133 and E190-197.

³ Robert Bothwell, Ian Drummond, and John English, Canada since 1945: Power, Politics, and Provincialism (Toronto: University of Toronto [U of T] Press, 1981).

scholarship, in taking a closer look at the years 1945-50, has come to recognize that the outcome was not pre-ordained to be a four decade-long Cold War.⁴

Canada played a pivotal role in the process as it unfolded. First-hand accounts have existed for some time, including Escott Reid's Time of Fear and Hope,⁵ but again the focus upon a specific, Eurocentric theme - the origins of NATO - has obscured the broader picture. The image portrayed is of a Canadian foreign policy establishment that was able to identify clear postwar objectives and pursue them with single-minded determination. In truth, the Department of External Affairs (DEA) found itself having to cope with a wide range of problems arising without warning in dispersed regions of the globe. Demanding the attention of the foreign service staff were such varied matters as the final negotiations for the entry of Newfoundland into Confederation, the future role in the Commonwealth of an independent, republican India, and "the remarkable range of disputes which came before the [United Nations] and upon which Canada was expected to define and articulate a position"⁶ such as Palestine, Kashmir and Indonesia.

⁴ An extremely useful overview of the global perspectives of this period is provided by Melvyn P. Leffler, A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), *passim*. A Canadian perspective is provided by Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957 (U of T Press, 1994).

⁵ Escott Reid, Time of Fear and Hope: The Making of the North Atlantic Treaty, 1947-49 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), *passim*. The specific points raised in the previous paragraph are discussed on pp. 10, 13-14, 102, and 126ff.

⁶ Hector Mackenzie (ed.), Documents on Canadian External Relations, Volume 15: 1949 [hereafter cited as DCER, (year)] (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1995), Introduction, p. xix. I am indebted to Dr Mackenzie for his assistance over the years in locating and declassifying records pertaining to this dissertation.

Still, for the Department of External Affairs, it was a time of optimism. The Department was imbued with the spirit of middle power functionalism which it espoused at the nascent United Nations: the country had matured internationally during the Second World War and there was a national conviction that the Dominion should play its part in building a new, more durable world order.⁷ Most government departments were contracting in the interests of fiscal restraint, both to pay for the war debt, and to finance the growing welfare state. This was especially true of the Department of National Defence (DND), upon whose efforts the country's reputation had in large part been built. In contrast, External was growing. New posts were opening throughout the world, and its ranks were filled by a disproportionate number of Canada's best and brightest.⁸ For the first few postwar years, they had been held in partial check by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King's isolationist tendencies, but that had changed with his retirement in September 1948. The department now enjoyed the support of the new prime minister, Louis St Laurent, who had held the External Affairs portfolio before assuming the premiership. The new minister, Lester Pearson, had been a career civil servant in the department, and was formerly St Laurent's under-secretary. Both were anxious to break

⁷ John Hilliker and Donald Barry, Canada's Department of External Affairs, Volume 2: Coming of Age, 1946-1968 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), p. 3.

⁸ J.L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), *passim*.

with the past and embark upon an activist foreign policy, appropriate to the country's growing international standing.⁹

The greater autonomy Canadian diplomats now enjoyed in reacting to various international situations had to be exercised in a context in which the old imperial relationship and even the more recent wartime alliances were changing. Steered by little more than the firm desire for a new internationalism, External Affairs managed each crisis on a case by case basis and any Canadian response involved a complex of factors. Of these, the principal ones were the creeping onset of the Cold War and the search for a new defence relationship within the North Atlantic Triangle of Canada, Great Britain and the United States. But the virtual disbandment of the armed forces was an increasingly important factor in developing any Canadian position.¹⁰ New light has been shed upon this era by the recent publication of the second volume of the official history of the

⁹ Arthur Andrew, The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney (Toronto: Lorimer, 1993), Part I, "The Age of Innocence", *passim*.

¹⁰ Canadian diplomatic scholarship is beginning to reassess the early Cold War years. Dr Hector Mackenzie of the Historical Section of what is now known as the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT [DEA]) elaborated upon this "case-by-case" theme in his unpublished paper, "The Cold War and Canada's Post-War Internationalism," presented at "'Peace in Their Time?': The End of the Second World War and the Beginning of the Cold War," a conference organized by the History Graduate Students Association, University of Ottawa, 27 January 1996. That the formal start of the Cold War in Canada came as late as October 1950, following the invasion of Chinese troops across the Yalu River into Korea, was the thesis of an unpublished paper by Robert Bothwell, "A World Turned Upside Down. Orthodoxy, Revisionism and Post-revisionism: Canada's Road to the Cold War," presented to "The Canadian State: Successes, Failures, Development," the Conference of the Organization for the Study of the National History of Canada, University of Ottawa, 25 November 1995.

Department of External Affairs, Coming of Age, 1946-1968,¹¹ which squarely sets the newfound conviction “that Canada should play its part in building a new, more durable world order”¹² within the context of the institutional organization that was developing to meet that challenge. It characterizes this postwar period as one in which “[i]nformal methods of management appropriate to earlier circumstances had to be revised in order to administer the larger, more complex institution that External Affairs was becoming” and where, at the same time, “the increasing range of foreign policy issues brought other branches of government into the policy process on a more sustained basis, so that new working relationships had to be established.”¹³

One of those new working relationships was with the Department of National Defence. As described by James Eayrs in his multi-volume study, In Defence of Canada,¹⁴ before the postwar period Canadian foreign and defence policies rarely had attained the integration wherein “the military and diplomatic components of national security policy are... indissolubly combined.”¹⁵ This was due initially to the interwar neglect of the forces, and hence their limited capacity to support foreign policy, and then

¹¹ Hilliker and Barry, Canada’s Department of External Affairs, Volume 2, *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁴ James Eayrs ultimately produced five volumes in the series. The two of most interest to this dissertation are: In Defence of Canada, Volume 3: Peacemaking and Deterrence (U of T Press, 1972), and Volume 4: Growing Up Allied, (U of T Press, 1980).

¹⁵ Eayrs, in the preface to Volume 1: From the Great War to the Great Depression (U of T Press, 1964), pp. ix-x.

to concentration during the Second World War upon contributing to the greater Allied cause. Ultimately, the disconnect was a direct result of an isolationist government policy, since Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (and his predecessors) had retained the post of Secretary for State of External Affairs, leaving management of the Defence portfolio to a succession of ministers who until the Second World War were frequently of the second rank in ability and influence. Now, with Canada's new middle power status, and with stronger ministers both at External (Louis St Laurent, and then Lester B. Pearson) and at National Defence (Brooke Claxton), a different set of variables came into play.

Still, the return to peace had taken Canada's diplomatic and military establishments down different paths. For the armed forces, postwar demobilization quickly degenerated into retrenchment. Before Claxton came to Defence from the Health portfolio in the Cabinet shuffle of 12 December 1946, there had been separate ministers for Air and for the Naval Service, with the senior National Defence portfolio being understood to pertain to the Army. The appointment of Claxton, who was fully cognizant of the fiscal pressures of the social restructuring upon which his government was embarking, did little to slow the economizing process, although his attempts to amalgamate the overall direction of the services into a single Department promised to rationalize it somewhat. The leading student of Canadian defence organization and administration, Douglas Bland, has acknowledged the importance of Claxton's creation

of a "National" Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in 1947,¹⁶ but he dwells upon neither the details nor the immediate operational consequences of the reorganization. Aside from Eayrs's volumes, with their episodic approach (not, it should be noted, including the *Crescent* mission), there exists no satisfactory general study of either the Department of National Defence or any of its individual services in this immediate postwar period. A Centennial year survey of the history of the Canadian Forces, for all of its appearances as an early "coffee table" offering, is surprisingly substantial, its brief section on the postwar RCN sprinkled with tantalizing references for anyone with the background knowledge to piece together.¹⁷

Some sense of this era can be gained from the biographies of the principal politicians and foreign policy mandarins, even if, once again, they do not feature the *Crescent* episode. Although a good study of St Laurent remains to be done, entirely satisfactory biographies of Pearson¹⁸ and Claxton¹⁹ have appeared in recent years. To this

¹⁶ Douglas Bland, The Administration of Defence Policy in Canada, 1947 to 1985 (Kingston, Ont.: R.P. Frye, 1987), pp. 13-17; and, Chiefs of Defence: Government and the Unified Command of the Canadian Armed Forces (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1995), pp. 43-50.

¹⁷ LCol D.J. Goodspeed, The Armed Forces of Canada: 1867-1967. A Century of Achievement (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1967), pp. 229-231.

¹⁸ John English, Shadow of Heaven: The Life of Lester Pearson, Volume One, 1897-1948 (London: Vintage, 1990), Chapters Eleven, "The World Stage," and Twelve, "A Sort of Armageddon," pp. 267-334; and, The Worldly Years: The Life of Lester Pearson, Volume Two, 1949-1972 (Vintage, 1993), Chapters One, "The Good Year [1949]," and Two, "Becoming Adult," pp. 1-64.

¹⁹ David Jay Bercuson, True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1898-1960 (U of T Press, 1992). Chapters Nine, "Revamping National Defence (1946-47), Ten, "Coping with the Cold War (1948-50)," and Eleven, "Korea and NATO (1950-52)," pp. 153-239.

list can be added the memoirs of Escott Reid, acting under-secretary at the time,²⁰ and historian Jack Granatstein's study of The Ottawa Men²¹ (Claxton prepared his own memoirs, although they were never published and reside on deposit in the NAC²²). Naval leaders have been less well served. No full-length biography of any senior Canadian officer has yet been attempted, although the Maritime Museum of British Columbia has compiled sketches of each of Canada's admirals and commodores²³ and recently a popular portrayal of Rollo Mainguy has appeared.²⁴ Only two senior officers have published their memoirs, but neither are particularly useful for this period: Horatio Nelson Lay was serving in Washington,²⁵ and Jeffry Brock's are colourful but too self-serving to be reliable.²⁶

²⁰ Escott Reid, Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid (U of T Press, 1989), Chapters Fourteen, "Creating the United Nations," Fifteen, "Creating the North Atlantic Alliance," and Sixteen, "Department of External Affairs." pp. 170-269.

²¹ *Op. cit.*

²² NAC. MG 32 B5, Brooke Claxton Papers, vol 220.

²³ John M. MacFarlane, Canada's Admirals and Commodores (Maritime Museum of British Columbia: Maritime Museum Notes, No. 8, August 1992).

²⁴ Arthur Bishop. "Save Our Navy: Walter Hose, Rollo Mainguy," in Salute: Canada's Military Leaders from Brock to Dextraze (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1997), pp. 111-137.

²⁵ Rear-Admiral Horatio Nelson Lay, Memoirs of a Mariner (Stittsville, Ont: Canada's Wings. 1982), *passim*.

²⁶ Jeffry V. Brock, With Many Voices: Memoirs of a Sailor, Volume I: The Dark Broad Seas (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), Chapters Ten, "Unwinding a War," Eleven, "Creative Activities of a Military Planner," Twelve, "A Change in Status," and Thirteen. "Canada Joins the Korean War," pp. 176-206ff.

This dearth of memoirs reflects the fact that the RCN, in full form as “the silent service.” has been particularly reticent about the 1946-49 years. The European war ended with the Royal Canadian Navy desperately trying to shake the popular but parochial image of “the Corvette Navy.” The hopes for a balanced peacetime fleet were dashed with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The third largest Allied fleet, with nearly 100,000 men and some 400 warships, was soon reduced to a rump of its glorious wartime establishment as the government authorized an “interim” force of 10,000 men until the postwar defence needs of the Dominion could be determined. By mid-1947, there were barely a half-dozen ships in service, divided between the two coasts, and employed on irregular training cruises. A series of breakdowns in relations between officers and men added to the problems of the Navy, leading ultimately to mutinies in three ships, one of which was *Crescent*. in the late winter of 1949. The one popular history of the Naval Service, written by a former officer, describes this time as “The Sickly Season,”²⁷ and passes quickly over it, from the story of the Battle of the Atlantic to the Cold War excitement of Korea and the promise of a “New Navy.”

²⁷ Commander (ret'd) Tony German, *The Sea is at Our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990), pp. 204-215. A more scholarly survey history of the RCN is in preparation by Marc Milner (and has been commented upon by this author), and he has a more positive assessment of this period, entitling the relevant chapters, “Toward a National Navy, 1945-1948,” and “A ‘Made in Canada’ Navy.”

A contemporary account of the RCN during the first postwar decade²⁸ introduced useful points for further study, but candid discussion of different aspects of this period of the RCN has begun only in recent years. The catalyst was a pair of conferences organized to commemorate the 70th and 75th anniversaries (in 1980 and 1985) of the founding of the Naval Service, prompting papers (among others) on "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report of 1949,"²⁹ and "The *St Laurent* Decision: Genesis of a Canadian Fleet."³⁰ significantly both by former officers who had been key participants in the events they described.³¹ The presentation in particular of Audette's paper to the 70th Anniversary Conference at Royal Roads Military College (RRMC) created quite a stir amongst the gathered senior retired and serving naval officers. Nevertheless, it reopened

²⁸ John D. Harbron, "Royal Canadian Navy at Peace 1945-1955: The Uncertain Heritage," in Queen's Quarterly Vol LXXIII: No 3 (Autumn, 1966), pp. 311-334. Harbron served as an "Instructor Lieutenant-Commander" at Royal Roads Military College (RRMC), 1948-51.

²⁹ L.C. Audette, "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report of 1949," in J.A. Boutilier (ed.), The RCN in Retrospect, 1910-1968 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia [UBC] Press, 1982), pp. 235-249.

³⁰ S. Mathwin Davis, "The *St Laurent* Decision: Genesis of a Canadian Fleet," in W.A.B. Douglas (ed.), RCN in Transition, 1910-1985 (UBC Press, 1988), pp 187-208. *St Laurent* was the lead ship of a modern and sophisticated class of anti-submarine destroyers (named after Canadian rivers, not prime ministers), and were the first warships wholly designed and produced in Canada.

³¹ Commander (RCNVR, ret'd) Louis Audette was one of the three commissioners on the Mainguy Commission investigating the "incidents" of 1949. Rear-Admiral (ret'd) Mathwin Davis, formerly a Naval Constructor in the Royal Navy, after coming to Canada in 1950 eventually became Director General - Ships in National Defence Headquarters, responsible for the design or construction of all warships in the Canadian fleet.

discussion of a subject considered closed other than for the purpose of indoctrinating junior officers with the “lessons learned.”

A younger generation has benefited from this willingness to re-examine the past, and recent years have witnessed a virtual explosion of research into the postwar RCN. The most ambitious effort is a dissertation by Michael Hennessy on the linkages of industry, navalism and the state in the formulation of Canadian naval policy.³² In tracing the efforts to coordinate a traditional maritime strategy as a conscious matter of government policy, he points to the newfound stature of the RCN (whatever its fiscal allocations) and an emerging recognition of the service as a Canadian institution rather than just a subset of the imperial fleet. More recently, Tyrone Pile has argued that the imperative to identify a rationale for the Canadian fleet led naval planners by late-1947 to pin the future of the RCN on redirecting its orientation to an anti-submarine (A/S) specialization, epitomized by the building of the *St Laurent* and follow-on classes, instead of the balanced fleet of their aspirations, which Pile contends “exceeded the economic and political tolerance of post-war Canada.”³³ Jan Drent concisely captures the dichotomy between the government’s view of “a good, workable little fleet” (as Naval Minister Bud Abbott described his postwar objective to the House of Commons in October 1945) and “[t]he Naval Staff’s unrelenting emphasis on a fleet in-being [which]

³² Michael A. Hennessy, “The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy, 1939-1965: A Study of Industry, Navalism and the State” (University of New Brunswick, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1995).

³³ Tyrone H.W. Pile, “Beyond the Workable Little Fleet: Post-war Planning and Policy in the RCN, 1945-1948” (University of Victoria, unpublished MA thesis, 1998), p. ii.

paid rich dividends in July 1950.”³⁴ Indeed, the potent surface gunnery of the *Tribals* was precisely the armament required for operations in Korea, and Peter Haydon has undertaken a much-needed re-assessment of Canadian naval operations in that “police action.”³⁵ Significantly, with only a single carrier at its disposal, and having assumed the commitment to NATO, the RCN could not deploy its most valuable asset, *Magnificent*, to the Far East. Nonetheless, the Naval Staff was able to maintain at least the illusion of a balanced fleet until the scrapping in 1970 of the last carrier, *Bonaventure*. Shawn Cafferky has charted the Canadian development of the helicopter-carrying destroyer,³⁶ and, in a dissertation also expected to be completed in 1999, Wilf Lund is researching the succession of manning policies which attempted to stave off the inevitable.³⁷ Precisely because Canada’s postwar armed forces - and the RCN in particular - were never very

³⁴ House of Commons, Debates, 9 October 1945, vol 2, column 1368; Eayrs, Peacemaking and Deterrence, p. 87; and Jan Drent, ““A Good Workable Little Fleet’: Canadian Naval Policy, 1945-1950,” in Michael Hadley, Rob Hubert, and Fred W. Crickard (eds.), A Nation’s Navy: In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), pp. 205-220 (the quote is from Drent’s conclusion, on p. 220). Drent’s piece in that volume is complemented by a paper by another recently retired naval officer, Peter T. Haydon, “Sailors, Admirals and Politicians: The Search for Identity after the War,” in A Nation’s Navy, pp. 221-234.

³⁵ Peter Haydon, “Canada’s Naval Commitment to the Korean War: Prudent Employment or Opportunism?”, in Peter T. Haydon and Ann L. Griffiths (eds.), Canada’s Pacific Naval Presence: Purposeful or Peripheral? (Halifax, NS: Dalhousie University Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 1999).

³⁶ Michael Shawn Cafferky, “Uncharted Waters: The Development of the Helicopter Carrying Destroyer in the Post-War Royal Canadian Navy, 1943-1964” (Carleton University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1996).

³⁷ Wilf Lund, “Manning Policies of the Royal Canadian Navy, 1945-1964” (University of Victoria, ongoing PhD dissertation, [1999?]).

large, personalities played a dominant role in policy development. The interaction of the Chiefs of Naval Staff and of the Naval Board is one remaining area of research for which invaluable primary records have recently been made available,³⁸ and it is being pursued by Peter Haydon.

A thesis by Peter Archambault dealing specifically with the Canadian mutinies of 1949 has placed them in the social tradition of the Royal Navy, where mutiny was more a form of labour-management dispute than seditious insurrection.³⁹ The instigators of the incidents in 1949 were traced to earlier troubles in HMCS *Ontario*, in 1947 (that cruiser provided last-minute drafts of experienced sailors to *Crescent* for the China cruise), but other possible connections to a major strike in the Canadian Merchant Marine in 1948 remain unexplored.⁴⁰ It was a linkage made at the time, as fears of possible subversion of the naval service were consonant with the anti-communist hysteria sweeping North America and lent immediacy to the investigation undertaken by Admiral Mainguy and his commissioners.⁴¹ Having dispelled Conservative leader George Drew's charges of communists in the government, St Laurent wanted this latest spectre of the "red menace"

³⁸ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 143, NSS 1279-118, "Naval Committees - Senior Officers Meetings."

³⁹ Peter Archambault, "Mutiny and the Imperial Tradition: The Canadian Naval Mutinies of 1949 and the Experience of Mutiny in the Royal Navy" (University of New Brunswick, unpublished MA thesis, 1992).

⁴⁰ See Jim Green, Against the Tide: The Story of the Canadian Seamen's Union (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986); and, William Kaplan, Everything that Floats: Pat Sullivan, Hal Banks and the Canadian Seamen's Union (U of T Press, 1987).

⁴¹ Whitaker and Marcuse, Cold War Canada, Chapter 14, "Labour's Cold War (I): Communists and Unions, 1945-1949." pp. 310-341.

also put to rest before seeking a mandate for his ministry in a general election being planned for June.⁴² The Mainguy Report fit that immediate purpose, and in so doing argued for other reforms to the Naval Service, which a grateful Government duly granted.

All analyses of the period have taken The Mainguy Report at face value, however, unaware that many of the recommendations therein had been presented to the same Liberal government some two years previously, in the fall of 1947. Dissatisfaction had been far more widespread in the spring and summer of that year. Students of the postwar RCN are only aware to this point of the incident in August 1947 in the cruiser *Ontario* - as recorded in The Mainguy Report - but there had also been troubles in the destroyers *Micmac* and *Nootka*, and at the Fleet School in Halifax, and fleet manning was frustrated by staggering rates of release and desertion, collectively styled "wastage". This dissertation will establish that if there was a point when the Royal Canadian Navy was close to fleetwide rebellion, it was in the summer of 1947, not the spring of 1949. An internal investigation by the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff alerted the minister in October 1947 to the extent of the malaise, and reforms were underway through 1948 and into 1949. Indeed, it will be demonstrated that it was the inadvertently clumsy implementation of one of these re-structuring schemes which precipitated the specific incidents in *Crescent* and *Athabaskan*. That the historians of the RCN listed in the previous paragraphs did not report these critical developments is due to their having been hindered by both the high-level perspective of their analyses and the unavailability of

⁴² J. W. Pickersgill, My Years with Louis St Laurent: A Political Memoir (U of T Press, 1975), pp. 75-76.

crucial documentation which has only recently been opened at the National Archives of Canada.⁴³ It was furthermore beyond their scope to extend the connection to an examination of the Navy as an instrument on the world stage, and particularly in the Far East. The potential ramifications on domestic politics of an overseas naval adventure gone sour have never been properly analysed.

What were Canada's interests in China? The untapped market potential of the Chinese hinterland had lured Western business interests over the previous century, but the first Canadians to arrive pursued a market of a different sort: that of human souls. The influence of Canadian missionaries spread beyond their adoptive country, as a good number of what can be called the "China hands" at External were either their off-spring or sympathetic to their advice.⁴⁴ Still, it was not until 1943 that an embassy was established in the capital of Chungking, as a measure of support for the wartime Nationalist ally. After the war, the capital and the diplomatic community moved to Nanking, which remained the site of the only official Canadian representation in Asia

⁴³ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 1596, NSS 4490-1, "Morale & Service Conditions - General"; and, RG 24, vol 8091, NSS 1279-17, "Committee on Advancement & Conditions in the Naval Service - New Substantive Rating Structure, 1948-49 [Peers Committee]."

⁴⁴ Alwyn J. Austin, Saving China: Canadian Missionaries in the Middle Kingdom 1888-1959 (U of T Press, 1986), and Paul M. Mitchell, "The Missionary Connection," in Paul M. Evans and B. Michael Frolic, eds., Reluctant Adversaries: Canada and the People's Republic of China, 1949-1970 (U of T Press, 1991). Still, DEA demonstrated a certain ambivalence towards the missionaries. Pearson's eventual biographer described the minister's own views as being that, "...like so many of the Methodist enthusiasms, the fascination, not to say the obsession, with China was one toward which Pearson cast a wary glance." in John English, "Lester Pearson and China," Reluctant Adversaries, p. 134.

outside of Tokyo.⁴⁵ About this time, finally sensing the market potential for agricultural products. Canadian businesses joined the rush to this latest frontier, although typically they remained closely associated with British interests in the Shanghai “concessions.”⁴⁶

For many of the Great Powers, hand-in-hand with trade and diplomatic representation in China had come the necessity for supporting military involvement. Gunboat patrols on the navigable rivers, especially, were required to instil some form of order conducive to trade as the Qing Dynasty slowly disintegrated.⁴⁷ Canada, however, did not ascribe to this form of representation, due to a combination of late arrival on the scene and lack of capability, while being able to enjoy the benefit of the British patrols. The gunboats had been withdrawn during the war against Japan, but the patrols were re-established to a certain extent in 1946. Victory over Japan had also led to renewal of the Civil War between the Nationalists and the Communists. Despite massive infusions of

⁴⁵ The best account of the establishment of Canadian diplomatic representation in China is Kim Richard Nossal, “Strange Bedfellows: Canada and China in War and Revolution, 1942-1947” (University of Toronto, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1977). The post in Japan, closed during the war, was re-opened upon its conclusion. By the time of *Crescent’s* mission, High Commission offices had been opened in New Delhi (1947) and Islamabad (1948) in anticipation of independence being granted to India and Pakistan, and thus establishing a policy of exchanging representatives with new Commonwealth members (Hilliker and Barry, *Coming of Age*, p. 12). Thereafter, the first non-Commonwealth diplomatic representation in Asia was not undertaken until 1954, in Jakarta, Indonesia.

⁴⁶ Ray Wylie (ed.), *China: An Introduction for Canadians* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, Ltd., 1973), p. 145. The nature and extent of Canadian trade with China remains a fertile area for investigation.

⁴⁷ Antony Preston and John Major, *Send a Gunboat! A Study of the Gunboat and its Role in British Policy, 1854-1904* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1967), *passim*.

American aid (and to a lesser but noteworthy extent, Canadian assistance⁴⁸), by late 1948, with the impending collapse of the Nationalist forces, there loomed the prospect of “losing China.” The resignation of Chiang Kai-shek on 21 January 1949, coincident with the swearing-in of the second Truman administration, seemed to the new Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, to offer the Americans a chance at least to postpone the complete disintegration of the situation. Again, there exists no good single source on the subject of the final Communist triumph over the Nationalists, let alone on any Canadian consequence of it. The best general history is provided by W.W. Stueck’s study of postwar American policy in the Far East up to the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950;⁴⁹ otherwise, the most useful accounts are provided by journalists.⁵⁰ Other than the first-person narrative of Chester Ronning, a foreign service officer at the Nanking Embassy throughout the period (he became chargé d'affaires upon the departure of the ambassador

⁴⁸ See Kim Nossal, “Business as Usual: Canadian Relations with China in the 1940s,” in Kim Nossal, ed., An Acceptance of Paradox: Essays in Honour of John W. Holmes (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Affairs, 1982), pp. 38-52.

⁴⁹ William Whitney Stueck, Jr., The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981). That said, a serviceable summary is Suzanne Pepper, “The KMT-CCP conflict 1945-1949,” in John K. Fairbank and Albert Feuerwerker (eds.), The Cambridge History of China. Volume 13: Republican China 1912-1949, Part 2 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 723-788.

⁵⁰ A. Doak Barnett, China on the Eve of Communist Takeover (New York: Praeger, 1963); Jack Belden, China Shakes the World (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970 [original copyright, 1949]); Edwin P. Hoyt, The Rise of the Chinese Republic: From the Last Emperor to Deng Xiaoping (New York: Da Capo Press, 1991); and, Noel Barber, The Fall of Shanghai (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1979).

in mid-October 1949),⁵¹ the only Canadian studies are academic papers concerned primarily with the later problem of recognition of the new regime.⁵²

The despatch of a Canadian warship to China in 1949 was a pure and simple exercise in gunboat diplomacy. Usually dismissed as a nineteenth century phenomenon, the demonstrative or coercive use of naval force in peacetime, properly applied, has remained a potent and popular diplomatic tool throughout the twentieth century, as illustrated by James Cable, a retired British diplomat, in his textbook survey on the subject.⁵³ Scholars of Canadian foreign policy, however, have missed the significance of the fact that the almost instinctive despatch of the RCN to attend in China in 1949 was made without any apparent sense that this was the first time a Canadian Government would call upon its Navy for diplomatic purposes in peacetime. Admittedly, previous ministries had flirted with its possibilities. The most dramatic of these episodes was in 1932, when HMC Ships *Skeena* and *Vancouver* were diverted to the port of Acajutla in the Republic of El Salvador in order to protect British economic interests threatened by

⁵¹ Chester Ronning, *A Memoir of China in Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1974).

⁵² See the various essays in Evans and Frolic, *Reluctant Adversaries*, *op. cit.*, as well as a clutch of theses and dissertations, among which the figure of Ronning looms large: see Brian Evans, "Ronning and Recognition: Years of Frustration," *ibid.*, pp. 148-167; Liao Dong, "Chester A. Ronning and Canada-China Relations (1945-1954)" (University of Regina, unpublished MA thesis, 1983); F.C. Raabe, "The China Issue in Canada: Politics and Foreign Policy" (Pennsylvania State University, unpublished PhD thesis, 1970); and, Stephen J. Beecroft, "Walking the Tightrope: Canadian China Policy, 1948-1957" (Cambridge University, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1986).

⁵³ James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy 1919-1991* (3rd edition), (London: Macmillan, 1994).

civil strife. Their brief but timely intervention was instrumental in suppressing the spread of revolution, but, as a detailed study of that episode underlines, these and similar RCN interventions in the Caribbean basin through the interwar years invariably had been at the instigation of the British Foreign Office and under the control of the Admiralty, with little more than the passive acquiescence of the Canadian government. It follows that:

... Canada's own interests and capabilities were irrelevant to the outcome of the R.C.N.'s operational deployment to Acajutla. The Navy enjoyed all the advantages which stemmed from the strength, tradition and demonstrated capacity of the Royal Navy and of its symbolic White Ensign.... The enacting of the statute of Westminster several weeks earlier did nothing to alter the clear provisions of the Naval Service Act respecting the chain of command to which His Majesty's Canadian Ships were subject.⁵⁴

The situations in 1932 and 1949 were, therefore, at once the same and very different. A Canadian warship still derived much of her prestige from the White Ensign flying at her stern, but the decision to despatch *Crescent* unquestionably was arrived at by the Canadian government. Still, if gunboat diplomacy is defined in part as "the use or threat of limited naval force, otherwise than as an act of war, in order to secure advantage or to avert loss."⁵⁵ the question is begged: whom was the Canadian government

⁵⁴ Serge Durflinger, "The Royal Canadian Navy and the Salvadorean Crisis of 1932" (McGill University, unpublished MA thesis, 1987), pp. 49 and 163. The Canadian experience with gunboat diplomacy was the subject of a conference sponsored by the Centre for Foreign Policy Studies at Dalhousie University, 29-30 May 1998. Under the title, Canadian Gunboats: The Canadian Navy as an Instrument of Foreign Policy, Past, Present and Future, the proceedings are being edited and introduced by this author, and will be published early in the year 2000. For the pre-1949 period, see especially, Serge Durflinger, "Serving Whose Interests? The RCN and Naval Diplomacy in El Salvador, 1932."

⁵⁵ Cable, p. 14. He assigns four categories of force short of war available to employers of gunboat diplomacy, in a roughly descending scale of violence (and, conversely, an

attempting to influence? Results, moreover, are not always those intended. As a model for the diplomatic use of naval force by a middle power, the experience of *Crescent* in China stands as an unfortunate precedent.

It is useful to set this Canadian foray against the experiences of Great Britain and the United States. Much more has been written of these long-time practitioners of gunboat diplomacy in China. In his sweeping study of postwar British naval policy, Eric Grove described the re-establishment of the Royal Navy's presence on the Yangtze as the prime example of "A Familiar Routine in a Changing World."⁵⁶ Malcolm Murfett has prepared the definitive account of the "*Amethyst* Incident," in which an RN warship engaged in the same Nanking guardship duties as *Crescent* was caught in the crossfire of the final Communist advance in April 1949.⁵⁷ Although the United States Navy (USN) had effectively withdrawn from the Chinese interior by this time, the Americans had a

ascending scale of vagueness): *definitive*, being the use of local force to create or remove a *fait accompli*; *purposeful*, to change the policy or character of a foreign government; *catalytic*, to stand nearby to take immediate advantage of a changing situation; and, *expressive*, to emphasize attitudes or to provide an outlet for emotions. The despatch of *Crescent* involved the extremely vague elements of expressive force, but more properly it must be seen in the same light as the British and American warships deployed, which would have been perceived as a relatively clear and compelling case of purposeful force.

⁵⁶ Eric J. Grove, *Vanguard to Trident: British Naval Policy since World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1987). The quote is the title of Chapter Four, pp. 127ff., derived from a mid-1945 Admiralty Plans Division appreciation of the postwar employment of the RN.

⁵⁷ Malcolm H. Murfett, *Hostage on the Yangtze: Britain, China and the Amethyst Crisis of 1949* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991). More recently, he has leant depth to Grove's *Vanguard to Trident* in a study of the naval part in British Far Eastern defence policy, *In Jeopardy: The Royal Navy and British Far Eastern Defence Policy, 1945-1951* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1995).

long history of such involvement - immortalized in the Hollywood production, The Sand Pebbles⁵⁸ - and their interest in the area continued. Rear-Admiral Kemp Tolley has written a popular history of the Yangtze Patrol,⁵⁹ which, flavoured with his reminiscences, offers a vivid description of life on the river. The global postwar naval context within which the USN operated is presented in Michael Isenberg's Shield of the Republic,⁶⁰ with a more detailed analysis of operations in Chinese waters provided by Edward Marolda of the United States Naval Historical Center.⁶¹

An interesting comparison can be made, on an entirely different level, with the experience of the Royal Australian Navy in the postwar years. Although separated by differences of nationality and geography, as James Goldrick has observed, the RCN and the RAN "were established to meet the same threats, and they were founded on exactly the same principles and in the same way."⁶² The familial relationship was underscored

⁵⁸ Richard McKenna, The Sand Pebbles (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) was a fictionalized account of a USN gunboat on the Yangtze in 1926 (the author had been a sailor in USS *Luzon*), made popular in the 1966 Steve McQueen-Richard Attenborough movie of the same name. The endurance of the *Amethyst* story likewise may be due in part to its depiction on the large screen, in a 1957 Richard Todd vehicle, Yangtze Incident (also released in the United States as Battle Hell!).

⁵⁹ Rear-Admiral (USN, ret'd) Kemp Tolley, Yangtze Patrol: The U.S. Navy in China (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute Press, 1971).

⁶⁰ Michael T. Isenberg, Shield of the Republic: The United States Navy in an Era of Cold War and Violent Peace. Volume I, 1945-1962 (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993).

⁶¹ Edward John Marolda, "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War, 1945-1952" (unpublished PhD dissertation, The George Washington University, 1990).

⁶² James Goldrick [Commander, RAN], "Strangers in Their Own Seas? A Comparison of the Australian and Canadian Naval Experience, 1910-1982" in A Nation's Navy, pp. 325-338.

when, upon arrival at Shanghai, *Crescent* was directed by the senior British officer to secure alongside the Australian frigate HMAS *Shoalhaven*. The Australians suffered no similar misadventures as the Canadians at that time, but they went through much of the same pain of postwar re-structuring. If anything, their agony was prolonged for want of a cataclysmic event demanding resolution, until 82 men were killed in the collision of the carrier HMAS *Melbourne* with the destroyer HMAS *Voyager* in 1964. That tragedy precipitated not one, but two Royal Commissions of Inquiry publicly reviewing the foundations of the RAN, in much the same way as the Mainguy Commission had done for the RCN fifteen years previous. Tom Frame has produced a comprehensive study which, not unlike this dissertation, uses the *Voyager* story to illustrate what he similarly styles "a watershed in the operational and administrative history of the RAN."⁶³

Strangely, the *Crescent* episode has failed to attract any critical or even popular examination on any level similar to those described above. The one mention of the incident in any work previous to this dissertation is by Stephen Beecroft, in his own dissertation. "Walking the tightrope: Canadian China policy 1948-57."⁶⁴ In the equivalent of only one page of double-spaced text, he is generally dismissive of *Crescent*'s presence, although even on this superficial level his summary is not entirely inaccurate:

... in the view of ... Canadian officials in China, the whole *Crescent* exercise was ludicrous and poorly thought out. The ship simply lounged

⁶³ Tom Frame, *Where Fate Calls: The HMAS Voyager Tragedy* (Sydney, Australia: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. xxvi.

⁶⁴ Beecroft. "Walking the tightrope," pp. 51-52.

about in Chinese waters for several months, showed the flag, had a minor but highly embarrassing mutiny and then left. It does not seem to have evacuated anyone.

* * *

It is not for want of primary evidence that *Crescent's* story has remained untold. Indeed, it is supported by a remarkable array of untapped records. Taken in combination with a growing number of secondary sources on related subjects, these can be used to good effect in exploring new avenues of research.

Naval regulations required all ship's captains to prepare detailed monthly "Reports of Proceedings". Not only was *Crescent* the only ship in continuous commission throughout the immediate postwar period, but where records of other ships' reports are fragmentary, *Crescent's* are remarkably complete.⁶⁵ Moreover, the ship was blessed with a succession of particularly observant and articulate commanding officers. All things considered, having surveyed the gamut of such reports in this period, it is this author's opinion that *Crescent's* are the most representative and useful collection. Where there are omissions, or for purposes of comparison, reference will be made to reports from other ships as appropriate.

In addition to this source, *Crescent's* log books and even a ship's newspaper (this itself a rare archival record for that period) can be found amongst the papers at the National Archives of Canada (NAC).⁶⁶ In the wake of the troubles in the summer of

⁶⁵ DHH, 8000-1, HMCS *Crescent*, "Reports of Proceedings" (also held at NAC, RG 24, Vol 11,388).

⁶⁶ NAC, RG 24, vols 8400-8406, HMCS *Crescent*, Ship's Logs, 1946-1953; and, NAC, RG 24, vol 11,388, The Crescent Globe Trotter [ship's newspaper], no's 1-9, 13-25

1947, as part of a renewed effort to foster better communication within the junior ranks of the fleet. In the fall of 1948 the RCN established an official "lower deck" magazine, Crowsnest, charged with portraying a cross-section of RCN activities. Despite its official sanction, it proved to be extremely popular as well as remarkably thorough in its coverage. Amongst its offerings are frequent articles on the progress of *Crescent's* adventures.⁶⁷

As for the actual cruise to China, although little remains of the NSHQ working records of the period, DEA maintained a complete chronological file on the episode.⁶⁸ The one significant limitation is that the file was commenced only after the decision to send a warship had been made, and research has had to be directed elsewhere to determine the conception of the idea. As for personal descriptions of the cruise, during the voyage across the Pacific, Lieutenant-Commander Groos had time to reflect upon his new command, the condition of his ship and her crew, and the implications for the

February 1949. For some unexplained reason, the NAC file identifies the paper as "Spout", a title which appears nowhere on it. Issue No. 10 (26 February 1949) is not on the file, and was obtained from CPO (ret'd) Jim Tyre during the course of an interview in Victoria, BC, 8 October 1997.

⁶⁷ See especially, Crowsnest, vol 1, no 9 (July 1949), pp. 4-6, "Crescent Reports: Cruise to the Far East."

⁶⁸ DEA 366-H-40, *op. cit.*, "Visit of H.M.C.S. Crescent to the Far East." Of note, there survive no RCN records of the cruise, other than *Crescent's* monthly Report of Proceedings, *op. cit.*, and passing reference in DND's annual reports to "a training cruise to China." Report of the Department of National Defence for the Fiscal Year ending 31 March 1949 [hereafter cited as DND Annual Report (year)] (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949), p. 36, and, DND Annual Report (1950), p. 38.

RCN.⁶⁹ Somewhat after the fact, a retired wartime officer (Lieutenant W.K.L. Lore) who was recalled to serve as the Chinese-language interpreter for the cruise prepared a memoir of the voyage,⁷⁰ and another of the ship's officers, the sub-lieutenant (P. Birch-Jones) who had the misfortune to be the duty officer on 15 March 1949, recently has published his own memories of the event.⁷¹

These first-person accounts are all the more valuable because the three officers each represented a different element of the postwar RCN officer corps: Groos, the "old RCN," trained before the Second World War according to Royal Navy methods and standards; Lore, those who joined for "hostilities only" and for various reasons remained on after; and Birch-Jones, a younger, fresh and inexperienced generation. These perspectives are consolidated in the testimony presented before the Mainguy Commission, which heard from some 238 witnesses, over 150 of them being petty officers and ratings; 48 were from *Crescent*, a higher proportional representation than either of the other two ships. The Mainguy Report was published as a slim but potent volume,⁷² and a copy of the in-camera testimony recently has been deposited in the

⁶⁹ Audette Papers, vol 13-5, "Enquiry - Exhibits," [LCdr Groos], "Report from sea - Written on passage from Esquimalt to Shanghai in February, 1949 (ROUGH DRAFT)."

⁷⁰ DHH, BIOG/L, Lt W.K.L. [Bill] Lore, "The CRESCENT Episode, 1949" (unpublished draft manuscript for Volume 4 of Salty Dips, publication pending).

⁷¹ Peter Birch-Jones, "HMCS *Crescent*: The China expedition of 1949 and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," in Resolution (Journal of the Maritime Museum of British Columbia), No. 24 (Fall 1991), pp. 13-19.

⁷² The Mainguy Report, *op. cit.*

NAC.⁷³ Providing as it does the candid opinions of a cross-section of officers and men, it offers a unique source for exploring the social history of the postwar RCN.

This opens an especially appealing opportunity because, although much has been written about naval policy and operations, there exists little insight into modern naval society.⁷⁴ Michael Hadley's article "The Popular Image of the Canadian Navy" offers many insights, but is admittedly only an introductory survey of this historiographical void.⁷⁵ Other than anecdotal wartime accounts such as those of Hal Lawrence and James Lamb,⁷⁶ the benchmarks of our knowledge are the contemporary accounts of William Pugsley, a public relations officer who went "undercover" to report life as viewed from the mess decks, first during the war and then again in the mid-1950s.⁷⁷ Louis Audette,

⁷³ Audette Papers, vols 13-6 through 14-4. This testimony was understood to have been destroyed upon completion of the inquiry, but Audette had the foresight to bend this promise, releasing it to the NAC only after the potential for repercussions to anyone's career had long passed. He thus preserved an indispensable set of records. The testimony may be reviewed by researchers, but is still governed by the restriction that no identifying citations be made without the permission of the individual, or unless he has been dead for over 20 years.

⁷⁴ Perhaps the best, full-length analysis of any naval society is N.A.M. Rodger, The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy [circa 1740-1755] (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1986).

⁷⁵ Michael L. Hadley, "The Popular Image of the Canadian Navy," in A Nation's Navy, pp. 35-56.

⁷⁶ Hal Lawrence, A Bloody War (Toronto, 1979) and Tales of the North Atlantic (Toronto, 1985), and James Lamb, The Corvette Navy (Toronto, 1977) and The Triangle Run (Toronto, 1986). Lawrence transferred to the RCN after the war, and served in *Crescent* in 1947.

⁷⁷ William H. Pugsley, Saints, Devils and Ordinary Seamen: Life on the Royal Canadian Navy's Lower Deck (Toronto: Collins, 1945); and Return to Sea: The Lower Deck of the Royal Canadian Navy re-visited eleven years after the 1945 demobilization (Toronto:

one of the commissioners, took the first hard look at the postwar Navy with his deliberately provocative essay, "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report," which, title notwithstanding, really only concentrated further upon the difficult officer-man relationships of the time, and instead has fed into the caricature of an indifferent officer corps rampant in its Britishness, to the exclusion of Canadian values.⁷⁸ The clearly inferred corollary is the characterization of the lower deck as "the cream of Canadian youth".⁷⁹ Like all good stereotypes, each of these has some grounding in fact, but neither has been properly analysed.

David Zimmerman has led the way in proper statistical analysis of the Canadian naval service. He has clearly established the differing social backgrounds between the officer and lower deck "classes" of the wartime navy, while pointing also to distinctions amongst the three branches of that service: the core permanent force RCN, or "straight-strippers": the naval reservists with previous marine service (RCNR); and the Volunteer

Collins, 1960).

⁷⁸ L.C. Audette, "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report of 1949," *op. cit.* This theme was explored further by William Glover, "The RCN: Royal Colonial or Royal Canadian Navy?" also in A Nation's Navy, pp. 71-90. Audette (one of the original commissioners) and Glover (a serving naval officer) did Canadian naval historiography a great service in sparking open debate of this theme. As correct as they may be, however, the purposefully narrow focus of their papers belies the complexity of the issue and instead has fed the controversy.

⁷⁹ The Mainguy Report, p. 57, for example, expressed the sentiment, "No one could sit face to face with the hundreds of young Canadians - officers and men - who told us the truth as they saw it, without a pride in the clean, strong manhood with which this land is blessed."

Reserve (RCNVR), or “wavy navy”.⁸⁰ Bob Caldwell has taken that one step further, outlining the growth of a distinct “VR culture” and its expression in the Halifax riots on VE-Day,⁸¹ and, again, Peter Archambault has situated the Canadian mutinies of 1949 firmly in the social tradition of British navies.⁸²

Still, the postwar lower deck remains essentially unknown. Although the works of Zimmerman and Caldwell have important implications for the immediate postwar period, they were writing about the wartime navy. The fleet that mutinied in 1947 and again in 1949 was different in several important respects. As for Archambault, when he undertook his research nearly a decade ago, several critical files were still “closed” under the restrictive federal Access to Information and Privacy laws. More problematic, discussion of the postwar navy has tended to devolve to the mutinies in general and from there to the specific issue of the degree of “Britishness” of the officer corps.

There is also the problem of primary source material: when it comes to the postwar RCN, especially the lower deck, there is none. Interviews with ratings are far less common than with officers, and even these for the most part are anecdotal at best for the 1945-1950 years, concentrating instead on operations of the Second World War and

⁸⁰ David Zimmerman, “The Social Background of the Wartime Navy: Some Statistical Data,” in A Nation’s Navy, pp. 256-279. The pejorative nicknames are derived from the style of officers’ gold rank braid.

⁸¹ Robert H. Caldwell, “Morale and Discipline in the Canadian Naval Service in the Second World War”, NDHQ, DHH Narrative No. 9A [second draft], 29 December 1998; and, “The VE-Day Riots in Halifax, 8-9 May 1945,” paper presented to the CNRS Conference, Calgary, 26 June 1998 (publication in The Northern Mariner forthcoming).

⁸² Archambault, “Mutiny and the Imperial Tradition,” *op. cit.*

the Korean conflicts which bookend the period. Finally, the naval system of personnel file management effectively restricts statistical analysis of these files to the officer corps, for which a useful sampling can quickly be drawn from The Navy List.⁸³ No similar lower deck listing exists, however, and even a random selection would encompass files from the entire postwar period up to unification in 1964, a span of 20 years with so many other social upheavals as to compound the variables exponentially. Any attempt at a "snapshot" for a particular year would be impractical.

Faced with such a *de facto* obstacle, this author was fortunate in the truest sense of the word to come into possession of a nominal roll for HMCS *Crescent*, dated 31 March 1949. That this is the only such list it has been possible to uncover from a ship of this period makes it an exceedingly rare archival record.⁸⁴ Its value is increased in that the list, prepared within a fortnight of the incident in that ship and before any crew changes could be effected, allows a unique look into a ship that mutinied.

Crescent's roll lists a complement of 14 officers and 187 men. Observing the requirements of federal Privacy legislation (that personal information be utilized for statistical purposes, and that the use of any specific examples be rendered anonymous), the individual service files were drawn from the National Archives' Personnel Records Centre so as to build a database of the following categories: rank (with date of promotion

⁸³ The Canadian Navy List: Containing List of Ships, Establishments and Officers of the Fleet (Ottawa: King's Printer [date var.]). Promulgated at six month intervals, these volumes identified all serving officers, categorizing them by affiliation, with cross-indexing by position held, seniority and branch.

⁸⁴ Obtained from the private holding of CPO (ret'd) Jim Tyre, *Crescent* Reunion Committee, Victoria, BC, 9 October 1997.

there-into), branch and trade, date and place of recruitment, entry plan, previous occupation, date of joining and departing *Crescent*, date released and discharge type, date and place of birth, ethnic origin, religion, and marital status.⁸⁵ All fourteen officers' files were available, but five of the ratings (2.7% of the sample) could not be located; of the remainder, most information required could be obtained from a combination of attestation (recruiting) papers and service history certificate (form NS-815), although in several instances either or both of these were missing or incomplete. The base sample, therefore, generally comprises 182 individuals, with some variations depending upon criteria. The actual composition of the ship's company will be contrasted to that envisioned for a *Crescent*-class ship by the 1946 Complement Committee.⁸⁶ Where comparisons are made to the Canadian population, the source is the 1951 census (1949 figures where available) reported in Historical Statistics of Canada.⁸⁷ Analysis is supplemented by testimony of members of *Crescent*'s ship's company before the Mainguy Commission,⁸⁸ and by interviews conducted by the author.

⁸⁵ The *Privacy Act* allows open use of information of persons dead more than 20 years, such as, for example, *Crescent*'s captain, then-Lieutenant-Commander David Groos. Otherwise, where references to individual ratings may be required, so as to preserve anonymity, the database has been re-arranged in a numerical order. It will be placed on deposit at DHH.

⁸⁶ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 129, file 1279-22, "Minutes of the 72nd Meeting of the Complement Committee: 72-1, Complement - CRESCENT Class Destroyer," 28 October 1946.

⁸⁷ Leacy, Historical Statistics of Canada, *op. cit.*

⁸⁸ Audette Papers, vols 13-12 and 14-1, "Testimony CRESCENT", June 1949.

Admittedly, one ship does not a navy make. There are problems in extrapolating any conclusions to cover the entire naval establishment, but using this invaluable material it is possible to begin to bridge the void in our understanding of the lower deck world of the postwar RCN. From that can be offered an alternative context for the mutinies in the Royal Canadian Navy in February and March of 1949.



A close examination of the conditions giving rise to and surrounding the cruise of HMCS *Crescent* will allow this dissertation to establish several new interpretations in postwar Canadian naval and diplomatic history. If *Crescent's* mission is important in itself, it is given deeper meaning by the people who formed her ship's company. Complementing a study of the cruise to China with a social analysis of a crew that mutinied offers this dissertation a waterfront perspective of the sometimes conflicting notions of national identity which coloured the immediate postwar period. At certain points it will become evident that our understanding of aspects of the history of the Royal Canadian Navy is imperfect, and occasionally it will be necessary to digress from *Crescent's* particular experience to redress the historical record. This will be done in recognition of the risk of presenting just another version of a high-level analysis.

The despatch of a Canadian warship to China in January 1949 was the only operational cruise undertaken by the RCN in the period between the end of the Second World War and the outbreak of the Korean conflict. As such, it serves as a point of departure for scrutiny of the formulation of Canadian foreign policy in a time of shifting allegiances, and the shared implementation of that policy by two government

departments. It is especially interesting that this was the first independent foreign policy initiative conceived by the new ministry of Louis St Laurent and his newly-elected Secretary of State for External Affairs (SSEA), Lester Pearson, whose activism stood in contrast to the isolationist tendencies of William Lyon Mackenzie King.

At the same time, the story of HMCS *Crescent* embraces the many themes characteristic of the postwar RCN: the hopes for a balanced peacetime fleet; retrenchment and the interim force; National Defence reorganization; the introduction of new ship types capable of handling the special problems of nuclear war in the air age; the declining state of repair and habitability in the ships remaining from the wartime fleet; recruiting and training; the personnel strains, not only between the officer and non-commissioned ranks, but also among members from diverse backgrounds within each of these groups; and, of course, the mutinies and the resulting commission of inquiry.

Ultimately, both the foreign policy and the naval-social dimensions of *Crescent's* story return to the question of identity. There persists an argument that in many ways the postwar RCN remained little more than a British squadron and was out of touch with the nation-building advances in mainstream Canadian thought.⁸⁹ But what was that mainstream Canadian thought? Nation-building means different things to different people, and autonomy can be expressed in different fashions. In the debate, particular attention has been drawn to the RCN's quest for a balanced postwar fleet. Was this pursuit simply a conditioned response by Canadian naval officers, especially the "straight-strippers" of the permanent force RCN, to exposure to Royal Navy training and

⁸⁹ The most explicit being Glover, "Royal Colonial Navy or Royal Canadian Navy?."

operations? Or was it an embodiment of the maturation of a belief that the navy could contribute materially to the growing autonomy of the nation? Earlier in this chapter, the prevailing interpretation of the postwar period was described as one of emphasis on patterns of change. The distinguished Canadian historian, Donald Creighton, preferred to style his earlier analysis of the longer eighteen-year period 1939-1957 as “The Forked Road,” when “Canada made a number of crucial decisions about its direction.”⁹⁰ The Royal Canadian Navy was every bit a part of this process.

As a British-built warship in Canadian naval service, there was nothing unique about HMCS *Crescent*, except that she was the last of a long evolutionary line which had its genesis even before the formal establishment of the RCN (see **Figure 5**). Each stage of *Crescent*'s career - her acquisition for commissioning in 1945 and subsequent employment as a cornerstone of the RCN's brief experience as a balanced fleet; her reconstruction in 1953-1955 to the standards of the Canadian-designed *St Laurent*-class; and her ultimate decommissioning coincident with that of the last aircraft carrier, *Bonaventure* - marked a symbolic milestone in the passing of the “Britishness” of the Royal Canadian Navy.

When *Crescent*'s keel was laid in a Scottish shipyard on 16 August 1943, there was, in the words of the official RCN historian, “no reason to suppose that she would become part of the Royal Canadian Navy.”⁹¹ The very next day, the first Quebec

⁹⁰ Donald Creighton, The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), p. xi.

⁹¹ “Brief History of HMCS *Crescent*”, p. 1.

Conference (17-24 August 1943) opened, and the whole course of the history of the RCN was altered, not least of which by the eventual acquisition of *Crescent*. Six years later, the Mainguy Commission would point to the strains of wartime expansion and peacetime contraction to establish the context for the incidents in *Crescent* and the rest of the Canadian fleet. Between the summer of 1943 and March of 1949 there unfolded the tale of an institution whose structure - and through that its very identity - was subject to fundamental challenge: was it to be balanced or coastal?; was its purpose training or operations?: was it Colonial or Canadian?

One response to this challenge would find a Canadian destroyer alongside a rain swept jetty on the Yangtze River in March 1949 (see **Figure 4**). The postwar Royal Canadian Navy is a study in the often painful reconciliation of competing influences, and HMCS *Crescent* was at the centre of it.

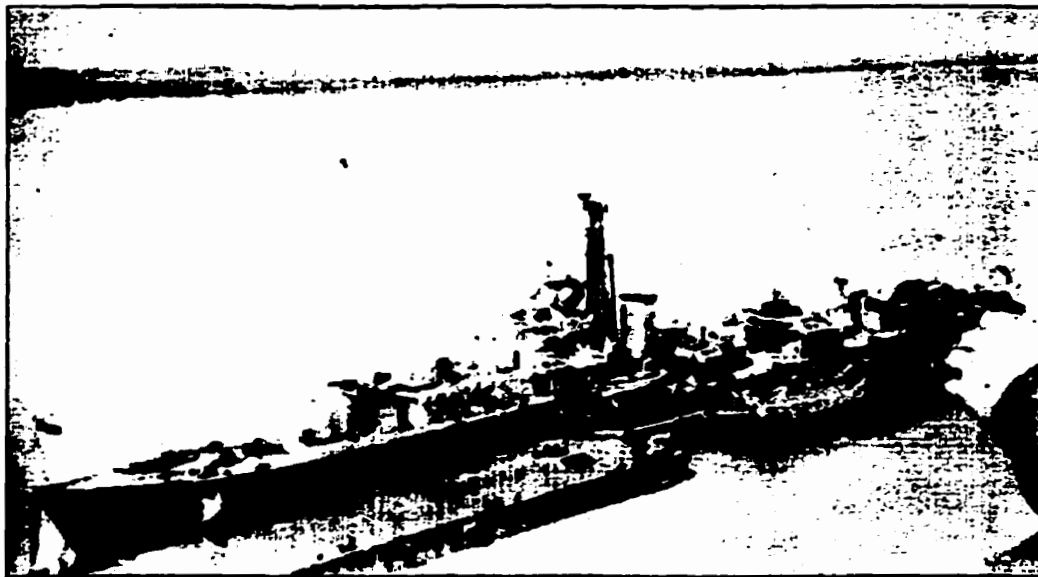


Figure 4: *Crescent* alongside the jetty at Nanking, March 1949 (photo from author's collection, courtesy Mr F.D.H. Nelson).

NAME	TYPE	YEAR	COMM'D RCN	PAID OFF	TONS	CREW	ARMAMENT (Original)
<i>Canada</i>	<i>Rattlesnake</i>	1886	FPS 1905, RCN 1915	1919	557	60	Guns - 2-12 pdrs, 2-3 pdrs
<i>Patrol Patrician</i>	Thomycroft "M"	1916	1920	1928	1025	82	Guns - 3 (3 X 1) 4", 1-2 pdr TT - 4 (2 X II) 21"
<i>Champlain Vancouver</i>	Thomycroft "S"	1919	1928	1936	1221	90	Guns - 3 (3 X 1) 4", 2-2 pdr TT - 4 (2 X II) 21" A/S - 30 DC
<i>Saguenay Sternu</i>	"A"	1931	1931	1945 1944	1770	10/171	Guns - 4 (4 X I) 4.7", 2-2 pdr TT - 8 (2 X IV) 21"
<i>Fraser St Laurent Restigouche</i>	"C"	1932	1937	1940	1900	10/171	Guns - 4 (4 X I) 4.7", 2-2 pdr TT - 8 (2 X IV) 21"
<i>Ontario Assiniboine Marguerite</i>	"C" "C" "C" "C" "B" (Leader) "D"	1932 1932 1932 1932 1932 1932	1937 1937 1938 1938 1939 1940	1945 1945 1942 1945 1940			
<i>Irvington Athabaskan Huron Haida</i>	Tribal (UK built)	1942 1943 1943 1943	1942 1943 1943 1943	1962 1944 1963 1963	2520	14/245	Guns - 6 (3 X II) 4.7", 2 (1 X II) 4", 4 (4 X I) 2-pdr, 6-20mm TT - 4 (1 X IV) 21"
<i>Onawa II Akwatenay Saskatchewan Gatineau Chaudière Du-Appelle</i>	"G" "D" "E" "E" "H" "F"	1936 1933 1935 1934 1936 1935	1943 1943 1943 1943 1943 1944	1945 1945 1946 1946 1945 1946	1860	10/171	Guns - 2/3 (2/3 X I) 4.7", 2-2 pdr TT - 4 (1 X IV) 21" A/S - Hedgehog
<i>Algonquin Stius</i>	"V"	1944	1944	1970 1963	2530	14/230	Guns - 4 (4 X I) 4.7", 4-40mm, 4-20mm TT - 8 (2 X IV) 21"
<i>Crescent Crusader</i>	"Cr"	1945	1945	1970 1980	2560	14/230	Guns - 4 (4 X I) 4.5", 4-40mm, 4-20mm TT - 4 (1 X IV) 21"
<i>Miracac Nondak Coyuga Athabaskan II</i>	Tribal (Canadian built)	1945 1946 1947 1948	1945 1946 1947 1948	1964 1964 1964 1966	2520	14/245	Guns - 6 (3 X II) 4.7", 2 (1 X II) 4", 4 (4 X I) 2-pdr, 6-20mm TT - 4 (1 X IV) 21"

Figure 5: British-designed Destroyers in RCN Service, 1905-1970.

Chapter 3: The Road to Nanking

As dawn broke on the morning of 28 January 1949, HMCS *Crescent* lay quietly at her moors in the naval harbour at Esquimalt, British Columbia. In a few hours, the destroyer was due to proceed in company with the other ships of the Pacific squadron - the cruiser *Ontario*, the more powerful *Tribal*-class destroyer *Athabaskan* and the frigate *Antigonish* - to the Caribbean, there to join the carrier *Magnificent* and the destroyer *Nootka* from the Atlantic squadron based in Halifax. Attempts in each of 1947 and 1948 to resume the pre-war practise of conducting fleet-wide winter exercises had had to be cancelled. due to persistent manning problems which severely restricted the number of ships in commission. But 1949 promised to be different, and senior officers of the RCN looked forward to this spring cruise with optimism. Through 1948, retention rates had recovered such that two additional destroyers had been commissioned, raising the total to six. None of these could boast full complements, but at last, together with the carrier and cruiser, there were the requisite hulls to conduct a meaningful set of fleet exercises.

Literally at the last minute, however, an unexpected distraction arose. As recorded by the RCN magazine Crowsnest, "the day of departure was full of surprises:"

The first indication of "something in the wind" was a delay in the ship's departure. At 1030 "Athabaskan" and "Antigonish" slipped and proceeded, followed by "Ontario" at 1100. "Crescent" was left looking a little forlorn on the big jetty at "Naden". The next big surprise was the announcement by the Minister of National Defence that the ship was proceeding to the Far East.¹

¹ Crowsnest, Vol. 1, No. 6 (April 1949), p. 16.

The whole notion of despatching a Canadian warship to the Far East had first been broached barely a week before. On 19 January 1949, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester Pearson, advised Cabinet that a turning point in the long-running civil war in China had arrived, and the fall of the Nationalist capital Nanking to the Communists seemed imminent. His colleagues agreed that something needed to be done to lend support to the Canadian Ambassador, Mr T.C. Davis, and to assist any Canadians wishing to be evacuated from the war-torn country. The acting under-secretary for External Affairs, Escott Reid, made inquiries of NSHQ, and this quick appraisal became the basis of his reply to Pearson on Monday, the 24th:

Following out your suggestion we enquired from the office of the Chief of the Naval Staff concerning the possibility of arranging for a Canadian destroyer to go to Chinese waters if such a request should be made by Cabinet.

2. We have been informed that the RCN flotilla is scheduled to sail from Vancouver [sic] for Mexico in four days' time. Any decision to divert ships should therefore be made shortly. All of the vessels are fitted out now for a long cruise so that no time would require to be devoted to preparation. The destroyer "Crescent"... would require 19 days 17 hours to reach Shanghai because of the necessity for stopping at Dutch Harbor [in the Aleutians] and Yokohama [Japan] for fuelling as it is not equipped to carry fuel for a trans-Pacific voyage.... The cruiser "Ontario"... would be a much more expensive vessel to keep for any length of time in Far Eastern waters. If an RCN vessel were to stand by in Far Eastern waters for a time it could be provisioned at Hong Kong.

3. Mr Davis has informed us in a recent communication that the British have a destroyer lying in the Yangtze River off Nanking to which members of the Embassy staffs would be evacuated in the event of rioting in Nanking. The British will probably have sufficient vessels in the area to take care of Canadians. On the other hand, it may be desirable to consider whether a Canadian vessel might not be very usefully employed in Chinese waters during the next month or two.²

² DEA 366-H-40, Reid to Pearson, 24 January 1949.

The precise criteria for the selection of *Crescent* for the mission is not recorded. Commander (S [Supply]) Vernon Howland, the personal secretary to the Chief of the Naval Staff, recalls, "It was a Saturday afternoon when I got the telephone call [from Escott Reid, on 22 January], and virtually everyone else had left at noon."³ The CNS was out of town until later in the next week, so Howland checked with the duty operations staff officer. He remembers his motivation as one common to all naval officers: "We had been brought up by all these great men to always take some action."⁴ Any of the ships in the Canadian squadron on the west coast could have been chosen - they were all at roughly the same level of readiness. The decision probably was accomplished by a simple process of elimination. The cruiser *Ontario* evidently was too large and expensive. The destroyer *Athabaskan* and frigate *Antigonish* were the other members of the "flotilla", but the smaller and lightly armed *Antigonish* would not have been considered for a long or dangerous mission. The choice of *Crescent* over *Athabaskan* could have been made on the basis that the former, specifically built as a fleet destroyer for operations in the vast reaches of the Pacific, had greater range than the *Tribal*, an important consideration for single-ship ocean steaming.

Understanding the whole question of a deployment to the Far East to be hypothetical, Howland saw no need to disturb any others of the senior staff. He would brief the CNS upon his return the next week. But on doing so, Howland was taken aback

³ Interviews. Captain (S)(ret'd) Vernon Howland, Kingston, Ontario, 24 May 1996, and Halifax, Nova Scotia, 31 May 1998.

⁴ Howland interview.

by Vice-Admiral Harold Grant's reaction: "I've never heard such a silly idea in all my life!" the CNS bellowed.⁵

The Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Chief of the Naval Staff had arrived at diametrically opposite opinions as to the appropriateness of calling upon the RCN to make a Canadian military presence felt in China. Why?

Other compelling questions arise. From where did this sudden decision to become involved in China spring? The natural presumption is that Canada was responding to a great power call for a show of solidarity in protecting vested Western interests overseas. An exhaustive search of archival records in three countries could uncover no trace whatsoever of a British or an American request for Canadian assistance in "saving China". Pearson was a personal friend of the British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, and of the American Secretary of State, Dean Acheson. They exchanged no correspondence on the subject. Neither is there anything in the military files. The Royal Navy's Commander-in-Chief in the Far East was surprised, however pleasantly, to have his forces buttressed by the unexpected arrival of a Canadian destroyer. From where did the inspiration for her despatch arise? Was it a decision informed by an appreciation of the true state of the postwar Royal Canadian Navy? What was the ability of the RCN to respond?

* • •

Although HMCS *Crescent* was to be the vessel of the unfolding adventure, the inspiration for her participation had been born, not in Naval Service Headquarters, but in

⁵ Howland interview.

the East Block offices of the Department of External Affairs. Like so many of the things animating *Crescent* and her mission, while the urge was spontaneous, the impulse ran deep. On 1 October 1947, when Canada was elected to the Security Council of the United Nations for the period 1948-49, Secretary of State for External Affairs Louis St Laurent had "laid down the whole position in unmistakable terms:"

Canada's election... confronts the Government and people of Canada with new and grave responsibilities. During the years 1948 and 1949, the Government will be faced as never before, with the necessity of making decisions on the major questions affecting the peace and security of the world. Many of these questions will arise from situations having their origins far from our shores....

Canada will be one of the eleven states on which will rest the main responsibility for overcoming the obstacles on the road to a just and lasting peace. We shall have to stand up and be counted before the eyes of a hopeful world...⁶

These noble sentiments were not enough, however, to overcome the impulse of Prime Minister Mackenzie King to avoid what he called "[the] great mistake... [of] Canada being brought into situations in Asia and Europe of which she knew nothing whatever, of interfering with Great Powers without realizing what [the] consequences might be."⁷ Consequently, Canada was noticeable by its absence from the two most important collective security initiatives of 1948: the UN Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK), and the Berlin Airlift. While King did allow his Secretary of State to negotiate Canada's becoming a member of a military alliance in peacetime for the first

⁶ "Statement by [SSEA], Louis St Laurent, 1 October 1947," as quoted in G.P. deT. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian External Relations (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 434.

⁷ Quoted in Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1994), p. 208.

time ever in its history, progress towards a North Atlantic Alliance was slowed by his known reticence.⁸ Upon King's retirement, however, St Laurent was able to return to his previously stated position with renewed vigour. On Remembrance Day, 1948, he delivered a speech in which he "denounced in ringing terms the idea of isolationism."⁹

In diplomacy, however, actions speak louder than words. When the British and Canadian under-secretaries of state (respectively, Gladwyn Jebb and Lester Pearson) approached their American counterpart, Dean Acheson, in March 1948 to undertake tripartite talks on a North Atlantic alliance, they initially encountered "powerful opposition within the United States administration to the idea."¹⁰ The Americans were neither hesitant at the concept of collective security nor reluctant to shoulder the superpower mantle; instead, they preferred that the Europeans take a greater responsibility for their own defence, confident in the notion that "an armed attack in the North Atlantic area against a signatory of the five-power [Brussels] treaty [would be considered] as an armed attack against the United States in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter."¹¹ Their hopes that the lesser western powers would accept a greater share of the defence load could not have been encouraged by Canada's example of

⁸ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict, Volume 2: 1941-1948, The Mackenzie King Era (U of T Press, 1981), pp. 416-418.

⁹ Glazebrook, p. 437.

¹⁰ Escott Reid, Time of Fear and Hope, p. 10.

¹¹ Quoted *ibid.*, p. 102, from Foreign Relations of the United States, 1948, III. Article 51 affirms "the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations."

apparent contentedness to stand aside from active involvement in any of the world's trouble spots.

Rather than withdrawing, however, the Americans became converted to the need for their leadership. They entered the negotiations so whole-heartedly that, in mid-January 1949, Canada's representative on the alliance working group, Hume Wrong (Canadian ambassador in Washington), reported the United States was proposing a revival of the wartime British-American Combined Chiefs of Staff as an alliance planning organization. Monitoring the progress from Ottawa, Escott Reid wired his concern that, if this was allowed to proceed, "we would find ourselves in almost exactly the same position as we were in during the last war when we were not consulted on questions of policy and when decisions were taken by individuals and bodies who had received no authority from us."¹² That there was no ready rejoinder to Wrong's rhetorical response - "does the Canadian Government want the Combined Chiefs to be abolished?" - demonstrated the limits of existing Canadian policy.¹³ The moment was ripe for some gesture to signal the changing of the guard in Ottawa. If the year 1949 opened under the still-darkening clouds of the growing crisis in Europe, it now was with a foreign policy establishment ready both to temper the American tendency to unilateralism and to demonstrate that Canada had the courage of its convictions to assume an active role in world affairs.

¹² NAC. MG 30, E101, Hume Wrong Papers, vol 6, file 32, "Ambassador's File- North Atlantic Security Pact, Jan[uary] 1949", SSEA to Canadian Ambassador Washington ["for Wrong from Reid"] [message] No. EX-97, 14 January 1949.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Wrong to Reid [Top Secret letter], 17 January 1949.

Into this mix of international problems and institutional opportunity came an apparent turning point in the long-running civil war in China. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists and the Communists under Mao Tse-Tung had been battling for nearly two decades, distracted only slightly by the war against the Japanese. It was on 18 January 1949 that Escott Reid - digressing momentarily from the developments in the NATO negotiations - reported to his minister that the military position of the Nationalist government was deteriorating rapidly. The large North China industrial centre of Tientsin had fallen on the 15th, and Peking was expected to surrender in a matter of days. This would free the massive Communist armies in Manchuria and North China to move south to join the assault on the Kuomintang capital of Nanking. The remaining Nationalist troops were "being drawn back for a defence of the Yangtze river line supported by the Chinese Navy." The assessment concluded, "It is difficult to say how long the Yangtze river line could be held. [The] Chinese, whose morale is one of the key factors, are not optimistic."¹⁴

Pearson raised the subject with his Cabinet colleagues on 19 January, with the ominous prediction that the fall of Nanking to the Communist forces "seemed imminent." The Nationalist government was preparing to withdraw to Canton, and "attached great importance" to the notion that the Ambassadors of friendly governments should

¹⁴ DCER, 1949, p. 1759, DEA/50055-40, Memorandum from Special Assistant to Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs, "China Situation," 18 January 1949.

accompany them south - a thinly veiled threat to their safety should they not do so.¹⁵

Canada had recognized Chiang's government in 1929, but Dominion interests in China were represented by the British ambassador until Prime Minister Mackenzie King established a separate mission in 1942, in part as a sign of support for a wartime ally, but also with an eye to fostering a favourable postwar trade climate within the massive Chinese market.¹⁶ After the Japanese defeat, the diplomatic community had followed Chiang from Chungking to Nanking, but, as one student of the situation has observed, "[the] Ambassador and his staff were appalled by the corruption, brutality, and repression [of the Nationalist regime] which they witnessed in China and reported their own views to Ottawa in the strongest possible terms."¹⁷ The Canadian presence in China remained limited. Of the approximately 850 nationals in the country in late 1948, the 350 business people in the Shanghai area identified more closely with the British concession community, and the remaining 500 mostly were missionaries spread throughout the hinterland.¹⁸ Still, trade considerations decidedly had moved to the fore. Pearson endorsed the recommendation of Ambassador Davis, that the Canadian Embassy follow the lead of the United Kingdom and the United States in remaining in Nanking, with a

¹⁵ NAC, RG 2, Reel 2643, Cabinet Conclusions - Meeting 19 January 1949, "China; current situation; withdrawal of Canadian Mission."

¹⁶ Nossal. "Strange Bedfellows," pp. v and 2.

¹⁷ Beecroft, "Canadian Policy towards China, 1949-957: The Recognition Problem," in Evans and Frolic, Reluctant Adversaries, p. 46.

¹⁸ NAC, RG 25, vol. 3974, [DEA] file 9857-40, "Evacuation of Canadians from China," Nanking to Ottawa. No. 224, 10 November 1948.

Consulate in Shanghai, "to look after the interests of [the] approximately 500 Canadians, missionaries and business people, who plan to remain on under the Communists...."¹⁹

Indeed, most Canadians wishing to leave the country already had done so. The families of embassy officials and female staff had been evacuated in mid-November, and at the same time the Canadian embassy had issued a general warning, to which some 80 persons wishing immediate repatriation to Canada responded.²⁰ Getting them out was a problem that had inspired only a temporary solution. The Ambassador reported that in the event of an emergency, the Royal Navy could evacuate all these Canadians to Hong Kong. But this raised two additional problems: once there, they would have to live in transit camps and the Hong Kong government was insisting that the costs incurred in this respect (running potentially to several thousands of dollars per person) be recovered in full, with guarantees in advance, from the appropriate Commonwealth governments.²¹ Moreover, even then, there remained the problem of the trans-Pacific passage home. Use of one of the RCAF's new long range DC-4 North Star transport aircraft was explored, but dismissed when it was determined that "With a double crew and an extra engine

¹⁹ Cabinet Conclusions, 19 January 1949, *op. cit.*

²⁰ DEA 9857-40, Nanking to Ottawa, No. 248, 25 November 1948.

²¹ Public Records Office, London (PRO), FO 371/75938, British Embassy Nanking to London, 13 December 1948. Early in 1948, the Canadian Government recognized that consular services to Canadians in the hinterland still were provided through the more numerous British posts, and had "promise[d] that Canada will underwrite payment by Canadian citizens for services rendered them by the British in the course of evacuation...." DEA 9857-40, *op. cit.*, Ottawa to Nanking, 26 February 1948. In this light, it is not improbable that one of the January, 1949 factors which Pearson considered was the expense of evacuation through Hong Kong.

aboard. [it] would not be able to carry any number of passengers back to Canada;" nor could an aircraft conveniently be kept in the vicinity indefinitely. Complicating matters further was the fact that, since Canada had not agreed to act as one of the occupying powers in Japan, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) could not permit any Canadian military forces to use Japanese territory as a staging base in and out of China.²² In the end, these people were evacuated in mid-December, on two chartered American commercial aircraft.²³

While solving the immediate problem, this did nothing for those Canadians still in China. Whether they anticipated remaining on under the Communists, or might require a later evacuation, there were legitimate concerns for their safety. A year earlier, in January 1948, as the diplomatic community in Nanking first began to prepare plans for evacuation, Ambassador Davis had cautioned that he had "been going on the assumption... that the forces to fear were external Communist forces," but recent incidents led him to believe that "we may be faced with serious conditions" as the Nationalist government collapsed and the xenophobic impulses of the Chinese surfaced; he "anticipate[d] food riots and perhaps labour riots all of which may be readily and purposely turned into anti-foreign disturbances," probably abetted by ill-disciplined

²² DEA 9857-40, Escott Reid, "Memorandum for the Acting Secretary of State for External Affairs [A/SSEA, MND Brooke Claxton, standing in for Pearson]," 19 November 1948, and 30 November 1948, and Ottawa to Nanking, No. 125, 26 February 1948. On the problems of employing an RCAF aircraft, see also DEA 9857-40, Ottawa to Nanking, 26 February 1948, in which Escott Reid advised, "The question of despatch of RCAF planes has been considered, but presents almost insurmountable technical, financial and other problems."

²³ *Ibid.*, Shanghai to Ottawa, No. 159, 16 December 1948.

Nationalist troops.²⁴ Now, these apprehensions were heightened on 21 January 1949 by the effective abdication of Chiang Kai-shek to Taiwan, concurrent with the new government's extension of peace feelers to the Communists.²⁵ While Ambassador Davis's continued expression of confidence in the Royal Navy was in a certain sense reassuring, it apparently nonetheless gave Pearson pause. To the new Secretary of State for External Affairs, the support and safety of Canadians abroad demanded a Canadian solution, and he knew just where to find it.

Oddly enough, it was Davis who had first proposed turning to the Royal Canadian Navy, only to have the idea dismissed by Pearson some eighteen months before. Shortly after arriving in Nanking in the summer of 1947, the new ambassador was faced with the general inefficiency of communications within China, even along the Yangtze River, and the excessive rates charged by Chinese companies to transport embassy supplies from Shanghai to Nanking. He had requested then-Under-Secretary Pearson to investigate "the possibility of Canadian fleet units visiting China." In addition to solving the immediate transport problem, these warships could also "lend prestige" to the junior Canadian legation by "showing the flag", and, to make it worthwhile for the navy, could operate

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Nanking to Ottawa, No. 45, "Evacuation of Embassy Staff in Case of Need," 20 January 1948.

²⁵ DEA Historical Section, DEA 50055-40, "Political & Military Situation in China," Nanking to Ottawa, No. 18, "Reflections on Chinese Government," 27 January 1949, in which Davis warns of "The chaos which looting troops and gangs of strong arm thieves, acting on instructions from the Government, could wreak in these cities would be a tremendous obstacle to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of these cities [Nanking and Shanghai] by the Communists." See also Barber, *The Fall of Shanghai*, p. 68, and *passim* on the general atmosphere at the time.

with the British Pacific Fleet “for training purposes.”²⁶ Pearson’s quick check with his colleagues in the defence department revealed that the potential shipping savings paled in comparison with the cost of deploying a destroyer. Instead, an RCAF Liberator (a bomber aircraft converted to long-range transport) was already on its way to the Far East, taking the Chief of the General Staff, General Harry Crerar, on a planned tour of the region, and it could handle short-term transport needs. Pearson admitted, however, “that there might be occasions or circumstances which would warrant sending one of our few warships to that part of the world... [although my] own feeling is... that it would probably be better to have it there on its own, than to associate it with the British Pacific Fleet... [as the] latter course might conceivably be misunderstood both in China and in Canada.”²⁷

Davis’s proposal undoubtedly had originated with his similarly newly arrived Third Secretary, Jack Maybee, who had just joined the department on resigning his wartime RCNVR commission, and was on his first foreign assignment.²⁸ Both were unfamiliar with the local situation, and their confidence in the potential employment of a Canadian warship overlooked one important detail: not even the British - and for that matter, neither the French nor the Americans - were operating warships on the Yangtze at

²⁶ NAC, MG 26, N1, Vol. 3, Pearson Papers, Pearson to T.C. Davis, 22 August 1947.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Interview, Ambassador Jack and Mrs Nevitt Maybee, Ambassador Arthur Menzies, and Colonel Freddy and Mrs Alice Clifford, Ottawa, 9 October 1996. The China post, a rarity for such a junior officer, had been recommended by Arthur Menzies, the DEA desk officer for the Far Eastern Section, on the basis of Maybee’s navy experience and the fact that his wife, Nevitt, had been born in China and was fluent in Mandarin. (Colonel Clifford was Canada’s military attaché in Nanking.)

that time. Foreign gunboats, so familiar on Chinese rivers throughout the 1920s and 1930s, had been banished by the Japanese occupation.²⁹ After the war, the altered circumstances of the restoration of Kuomintang control did not permit a renewal of extraterritorial status and freedom of movement on internal Chinese waters. Warships were allowed into the Shanghai Bund, but no further.³⁰

Maybee was driven to undertake a fuller examination of the issue within only a matter of months, when an outbreak of anti-government rioting later in 1947 led the international community to begin seriously to discuss evacuation plans. His report, forwarded by Davis to Ottawa, of a meeting at the British embassy admitted that “the difficulties in the way of using British ships and /or aircraft in a proper and legal manner would be considerable.” But it clearly implied that such action was contemplated, and his background as a former naval officer rings through the lines, as he described the plan for a gunboat to lay down a creeping barrage “[enabling] the residents to escape... to the boats.” although again he reinforced the warnings that it was more likely that transport aircraft “would be shot down by the Chinese in attempting to land.” and, prophetically, “the possibility of getting ships up the river would be very slim if the Chinese chose to obstruct.”³¹ As the situation continued to deteriorate and evacuation planning continued,

²⁹ Tolley, Yangtze Patrol, pp. 252-54.

³⁰ H.A. Smith, The Law and Custom of the Sea (London: Stevens & Sons, 1950), Chapter 2: “Internal Waters,” pp. 23-32, discusses the state of thinking on the subject, as understood in the immediate postwar period. Of note, this volume was issued as an official RCN publication, BRCN 306.

³¹ DEA 9857-40, *op. cit.*, Nanking to Ottawa, No. 644, 6 December 1947.

Davis reminded Ottawa that Royal Navy ships were not allowed in Nanking and in consequence "Canadian naval help would be futile."³²

When Pearson came to consider his options in January, 1949, however, the situation had changed. In response to British concern over the deteriorating situation, in November, 1948 the Nationalist Government granted permission for foreign warships to patrol upriver to Nanking. The Royal Navy immediately increased its force in Shanghai and began to station a destroyer or frigate, in rotation, in the capital.³³ Ambassador Davis informed the Secretary of State of this development, noting the reassurance it provided the diplomatic community, and expressing his satisfaction that "the British will probably have sufficient vessels in the area to take care of Canadians."³⁴

The view from Ottawa was somewhat different. An internal consensus was developing that Canada should be seen to be accepting responsibility for its overseas obligations. Davis's earlier warnings on the limitations of naval support were pushed to the background as Escott Reid offered, in his 24 January 1949 reply to Pearson, that "Following out your suggestion... it may be desirable to consider whether a Canadian [naval] vessel might not be very usefully employed in Chinese waters during the next month or two".³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, Nanking to Ottawa, No. 45, 20 January 1948.

³³ PRO. FO 371/75939, Nanking [Brit] to London, 9 November 1948. For further background, see Murfett, Hostage on the Yangtze, pp. 30-35.

³⁴ DEA 366-H-40, ER to SSEA, 24 January 1949, *op. cit.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

It is intriguing that the inspiration for despatching a Canadian warship to China was Pearson's. Eighteen months before, he had dismissed the same recommendation, primarily on the grounds of cost, but



Figure 6: Lester Pearson (right) and Escott Reid survey the world (NAC, PA-121700).

also because “to associate [one of our warships] with the British Pacific Fleet... might conceivably be misunderstood.” In the present situation, with St Laurent's government desiring an official Canadian military presence in China, considerations as to cost were put aside. But even if there was no appropriate role for the Army, and the limitations of air evacuation ruled out the RCAF, why turn to the RCN? If the argument is true that the postwar Royal Canadian Navy remained little more than a British squadron and was out of touch with the nation-building advances in mainstream Canadian thought, why should one of the most prominent of those nation-builders embark upon this particular course of action - apparently of his own accord - if there was any chance that it might be misunderstood?

Just as there is no direct evidence linking the decision to become engaged in China to the progress on the NATO negotiations, there is no record explaining Pearson's presumption of the appropriateness and readiness of the RCN to respond. Arthur

Menzies, ambassador to China in the 1970s, but at that time External's desk officer for the Far East Section, does not remember the precise decision-making sequence, but he still harbours fond memories of the spirit driving the department at the time, that Canada's burgeoning middle power status demanded "[we] pay our dues for past benefits enjoyed, which was especially true in China, and that it was time to start carrying our own weight.... It was recognition of Canadian military power and ability. Canadian interests in China were significant enough to be deserving of our own protection."³⁶ The naval service already had been a particular beneficiary of a slightly different expression of this perception. When for a variety of reasons an official history of RCN operations in the war was threatened with cancellation, its survival was credited to "a Mr L.B. Pearson of the Department of External Affairs, who suggested that foreign powers might be impressed by the fact that Canada apparently was not sufficiently interested in her armed forces to write a history of their achievements."³⁷ In January of 1949, in the minds of

³⁶ Maybee, Menzies and Clifford interview. The others echoed Menzies' views, especially Nevitt Maybee, as she and Menzies both had been born in China, and as such their births were registered with the local British consulates.

³⁷ C.P. Stacey, A Date with History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian (Ottawa: Deneau, [n.d., 1982]), pp. 195-196. The problem was that the true story of the navy's wartime experience was somewhat more chequered, as the RCN's official historian was determining. Dr Gilbert Norman Tucker's efforts were foreclosed by the Naval Staff after the completion of only two volumes, the first dealing with the Navy's history up to 1939, and the second restricted to an overview of wartime administration and shore establishments: The Naval Service of Canada, Its Official History, Volume I: Origins and Early Years and Volume II: Activities on Shore During the Second World War (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952). In a different interpretation of the demise of the Navy's official history, Stacey (the official Army historian), *op. cit.*, points the finger at the general disinterest of the Defence Minister, Brooke Claxton, in Canada's war record. Whatever the version, Pearson's intervention was not enough to save a critical look at the Navy's war record; instead, Joseph Schull was commissioned to write a popular account, Far

those who counted at External, there remained the sense that the Royal Canadian Navy had ended the war as the third largest fleet in the world, and Canada was still basking in the reflected glory.

Admiral Grant's reaction was informed by less prosaic realities. As a midshipman, he had been involved with the Royal Navy's operations in North Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1919, and he knew the demands of relief force work. As well, other senior Canadian officers,



Figure 7: Vice-Admiral Harold Grant (left) handing over the post of Chief of Naval Staff to Rear-Admiral Rollo Mainguy, Ottawa, 1 December 1951. The photos on the wall are of (left) Rear-Admiral Charles Kingsmill and Commodore Walter Hose. (NAC, PA-139977)

including his immediate predecessor as CNS, Vice-Admiral H.E. Reid, had served with the RN on the China Station, and surely had recounted their experiences, so the pitfalls of

Distant Ships: An Official Account of Canadian Naval Operations in World War II (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950). While entirely readable and fitting both the Naval Staff's and External's immediate requirements, Schull's rendering is less than satisfying on many elements of the RCN's contribution, and the "official" operational history is only now in the final stages of completion.

In a supremely ironic twist of fate, Jack Maybee's last appointment in the Navy had been to assist Tucker. Sensing the impending demise of the project, he leapt at the opportunity to move to External [Maybee interview].

operating in the area were not entirely foreign to him.³⁸ But, most importantly, as Chief of the Naval Staff, he knew better than anyone else the exact state of readiness of the Canadian fleet, and, contrary to the rosy assessment at External, it was not heartening.

The reactions of each of Pearson and Grant were informed by very different understandings of the history of the Royal Canadian Navy, and more specifically of the expectations held over the years by Canadian governments for their fleet. As that history is also generally misunderstood by Canadian naval historians, and as its repercussions would impact directly upon *Crescent's* mission to the Far East, it is appropriate to digress from the unfolding of events in 1949 to develop an understanding of it.

* • *

For all the attention directed at the RCN and its quest for a balanced postwar fleet, analysis has not progressed beyond the assertion that Canadian planning seemed to be driven by a single-minded preference of senior naval officers for the British surface warfare-oriented model of carriers, cruisers and destroyers (the alternatives supposedly being an American-style strike carrier force, or a more modest mix of anti-submarine destroyers and frigates).³⁹ The problem arises from confusion over use of the terms

³⁸ MacFarlane, Canada's Admirals and Commodores, pp. 22 and 39.

³⁹ Glover, "Royal Colonial Navy or Royal Canadian Navy," *op. cit.*, a theme elaborated in his "Officer Training and the Quest for Operational Efficiency in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945" (King's College, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1998), pp. 292-296 and *passim*, and Pile, "Beyond the Workable Little Fleet," *op. cit.*, pp. 10-35, are only the latest contributions. First to broach the subject, after nearly 30 years of its being ignored, was Alec Douglas, "Conflict and Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy, 1939-1945," in Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century, pp. 210-231. He was followed by Hennessy, "The Rise and Fall of a Canadian Maritime Policy, 1939-1965", *op. cit.*, pp. 108-134; and, Cafferky, "Uncharted Waters", *op. cit.*, pp. 53-82.

“balanced fleet” and “fleet unit.” To modern observers, these imply one and the same thing: a grouping of ships of various sizes and classes, arranged to undertake tasks across the spectrum of naval warfare. The two notions sprang, however, from different conceptual premises: “fleet unit” was a British construct, encompassing the full range of warships from capital ships through cruisers, destroyers and submarines; the “balanced fleet” advocated by Canadian naval planners invariably was a more modest version, generally restricted to cruisers and destroyers. Historians have overlooked the subtle facts that, although the terms sometimes were used with apparent interchangeability, they were never used synonymously until a crucial point in 1943-44, when the Naval Staff recommended for the first time that a large permanent peacetime force should include capital ships, specifically aircraft carriers. Contrary to popular interpretations, this was entirely appropriate to the circumstances and, most importantly, Canadian politicians saw it as a logical progression. It is significant also that, in this structure, Canadian naval officers favoured neither an American nor a British model, but one uniquely Canadian, the product of their years of experience as to what they understood the nation to need, what they felt confident to provide, and what they knew politicians would sanction.

Historians point to four critical junctures (1909, 1919, 1940, and 1943) in Canadian fleet planning to make their case for the pro-British inclinations of senior officers. Close inspection reveals, however, that, on each of the first three occasions, they deliberately turned away from the British model in favour of a structure more appropriate to the Canadian situation, and that the fourth was influenced more by the introduction of a third concept - the carrier task force. Another date - 1923 - should be added as an often

overlooked counterpoint. A survey of the history of the fleet structure of the Canadian Naval Service demands the reassessment that, for all its potent symbolism, the central identifying image of the British idea of a "fleet unit" is one that never in reality displaced the national "balanced fleet" expectations of the Naval Staff.

The pattern was established long before the Royal Canadian Navy came into existence on 4 May 1910, amidst great controversy over Canada's role in the Dreadnought battleship arms race between Britain and Imperial Germany.⁴⁰ The real impetus for an indigenous naval force had grown in the post-Boer War period out of what historian Carl Berger called "the sense of power"⁴¹ developing amongst Canadian nationalists. As part of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier's response to calls for general Militia reform, "An Act Constituting the Naval Militia of Canada" was drafted for presentation in the 1904 parliamentary session.⁴² The proposal enjoyed non-partisan

⁴⁰ The standard reference on the origins of the Canadian Naval Service is Tucker, *op. cit.*, Vol I: Origins and Early Years. Recent scholarship, however, has demonstrated the official history's weaknesses in the turn-of-the-century period; the reconstruction here is developed from this author's "'Tin-Pots' or Dreadnoughts? The Evolution of the Naval Policy of the Laurier Administration, 1896-1911" (Trent University, unpublished MA thesis, 1981), and "Reassessing the Dreadnought Crisis of 1909 and the Origins of the Royal Canadian Navy," in The Northern Mariner / Le marin du nord, vol. IV, no. 1 (January 1994), pp. 35-53. An indispensable source synthesizing the available literature is a collection of essays by Roger Sarty, The Maritime Defence of Canada [hereafter cited as MDC] (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996), as is Michael Hadley and Roger Sarty, Tin-Pots and Pirate Ships: Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders, 1880-1918 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

⁴¹ Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914 (U of T Press, 1970).

⁴² NAC, MG 27, II, C4, L.P. Brodeur Papers, Docket No. 2, An Act Constituting the Naval Militia of Canada (draft) (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1904), attached to "Memorandum for the Deputy Minister Reference Canadian Naval Militia," 28 January

support in the House of Commons, but generally has escaped the notice of historians⁴³ because it was dropped in the face of an unexpected and significant increase in government expenditures in 1904, when the Militia assumed responsibility for the garrisons at Halifax and Esquimalt. Laurier nonetheless allowed the transfer of the Royal Navy Dockyards in those ports to Canadian control and two new “cruisers” were acquired for the Fisheries Protection Service. One of these, the Canadian Government Ship *Canada* (in fact, a modified “torpedo catcher” design which was even then evolving into the classic notion of a “destroyer”⁴⁴), in February 1905 began an annual pattern of wintering in Bermuda to conduct manoeuvres with the Royal Navy’s North America and West Indies Squadron, and continued to be described in Parliament as “the flagship of the Canadian navy.”⁴⁵

We know of Laurier’s vision for the nascent Canadian fleet because of the initiation to the subject he provided his protégé, the future Liberal prime minister,

1907.

⁴³ The exception is Roger Sarty, whose own dissertation, “Silent Sentry: A Military and Political History of Canadian Coast Defence 1860-1945” (unpublished PhD dissertation, U of T, 1982), Chapter 2, “The Transfer of Halifax and Esquimalt,” and subsequent work have explored this period in detail.

⁴⁴ Cocker, *Destroyers of the Royal Navy*, pp. 10-12. *Canada* was based on the *Rattlesnake* design of 1886.

⁴⁵ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, Sessional Paper No. 21 (1905-1908), “[Annual] Report[s] of the Department of Marine and Fisheries”; Captain Ernest J. Chambers, *The Canadian Marine: A History of the Department of Marine and Fisheries* (Toronto: Canadian Marine and Fisheries Publisher, 1905), pp. 85 and 72; and House of Commons, *Debates*, 5 April 1907 (col. 5964).

William Lyon Mackenzie King. King's private diary entry for 24 February 1908 recorded a philosophy which, with very little variation, was his guide for the next four decades:

The situation reveals to me... the necessity of our doing something in the way of our having a navy of our own.... In speaking of a navy of our own, I do not mean that we would act independently in any way of the British. An arrangement could be effected whereby a complete unity of action could be effected. I think, however, that it would be better for us in voting money to control expenditure and it is well to accompany any imperial sentiment by a healthy Canadian national spirit as well.⁴⁶

Very shortly thereafter, in May 1908, Rear-Admiral Charles E. Kingsmill, a Canadian serving in the Royal Navy, returned home to take charge of the recently reorganized Canadian Marine Service. For an officer schooled entirely in the ways of the RN, Kingsmill proved remarkably adept at divining a view of the Dominion's naval requirements which was entirely consistent with that of the Liberal government. His preliminary report on how "...we should commence our work of assisting in the defence of our coasts" envisioned using the existing Fisheries establishment to begin training at Halifax, from which:

The men trained in the first year would be available to man a destroyer or a Scout [small cruiser] next year, and so on until we had sufficient officers and men well trained to man our proposed defence which should, in my opinion, be confined to Destroyers and Scouts for many a long day.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ NAC, MG 26, J4, King Papers, Private Diary, Monday 24 February 1908 (afternoon entry). Cited in R. MacGregor Dawson, William Mackenzie King: A Political Biography, Volume I, 1874-1923 (U of T Press, 1958), pp. 160-161. The occasion was a suggestion early in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt that the United States Navy's "Great White Fleet" visit Vancouver and Victoria as part of its round-the-world cruise. It is significant that, for a man who tends to be remembered more for his disdain of militarism, King's impression of indigenous naval development was favourable.

⁴⁷ Brodeur Papers, Docket No. 5, "Memorandum on Coast Defence," 1 February 1909.

This proposal was being readied for presentation to Parliament when the Dreadnought Crisis erupted in mid-March 1909, over the degree to which the Royal Navy should maintain its lead over Germany in battleship production.⁴⁸ The British debate ignited interest throughout the Empire, but the Canadian national consensus did not waiver, and, in the course of the debate on 29 March 1909, Laurier obtained unanimous consent for “the speedy organization of a Canadian naval service”⁴⁹ modelled upon the familiar plan for a gradual and balanced expansion of the Fisheries Protection Service.⁵⁰

When Kingsmill proceeded to London to negotiate the inclusion of the newly sanctioned Canadian Naval Militia into the defence apparatus of the Empire, however, he discovered that the mercurial First Sea Lord, Sir John Fisher, was using the opportunity presented by the Dreadnought Crisis to press for a major revamping of the Imperial naval defence system. To share in the burden, the colonies had two options: make a substantial monetary contribution to assist the Royal Navy, or establish a local naval force which in time of war could contribute “immediately and materially to the requirements of Imperial

⁴⁸ Arthur J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919. Volume I: The Road to War, 1904-1914 (Oxford University Press, 1961). Chapter VII: “The Navy Scare of 1909,” pp. 151-185.

⁴⁹ House of Commons, Debates, 29 March 1909 (col. 3565).

⁵⁰ The coincidental timing with the Canadian debate has resulted, in studies of the formation of the Canadian Naval Service, in the perpetuation of a direct causal relationship between the two events, highlighting the imperial, and therefore overshadowing the Canadian, rationale for establishing a Dominion naval force. Correcting this historiographical problem was the thrust of Gimblett, “Reassessing the Dreadnought Crisis of 1909,” *op. cit.*

defence.”⁵¹ The “fleet unit” Fisher advocated consisted of a dreadnought battlecruiser supported by three cruisers, six destroyers and three submarines. It was a clearly offensive ocean-going force, well beyond the defensive coastal forces previously implied, and which the Admiralty now dismissed as ineffective due to their poor radius of action and limited sea-keeping capabilities. In protracted negotiations, Laurier and Kingsmill convinced the Admiralty to drop the battlecruiser from the Canadian establishment; in return, they agreed to the construction in Canada of sea-going cruisers and destroyers, and accepted in the interim the loan of two aging but impressive protected cruisers as training vessels - the 11,000-ton *Niobe* and 3,440-ton *Rainbow*. This compromise satisfied neither English Canadians, who saw it as inadequate to Admiralty needs for global trade protection, nor French Canadians, who perceived a naval force suddenly available for overseas imperial adventures.

The national consensus had evaporated, and the Naval Bill of 1910 establishing the RCN passed by sheer weight of Liberal votes. After becoming prime minister in the 1911 election, Robert Borden let the tenders for new vessels lapse, put a halt to recruiting, and instead took up the cause of a one-time “emergency” contribution covering the construction costs of three dreadnought battleships for the RN, only to see this too come to nought, defeated by the Liberal dominated Senate. When the Great War erupted in 1914, the RCN was unable to muster any effective forces and did not contribute materially to victory.

⁵¹ Brodeur Papers, Confidential Papers Laid Before the Imperial Conference 1909, “Admiralty Memorandum on Naval Defence,” p. 30.

Most military institutions find in the experience of war, whether in victory or defeat, a foundation upon which to build a better future. Therein lay the problem for the RCN in the First World War. Its two operational ventures (“encounters” is too specific a word) against German forces consisted of the potentially suicidal foray in August 1914 of the obsolete *Rainbow* to search (without success) for the cruiser *Leipzig*, and then the retreat in August 1918 of the armed yacht *Hochelaga* in the face of U-156.⁵² Neither was the stuff of proud tradition. Rather, the importance of the First World War to the Canadian naval experience lay in the development of abstract, if nonetheless potent concepts. While the “hard-luck flotilla”⁵³ of their own service could offer no grand contribution to the war effort, the future leaders of the RCN all saw action as midshipmen with the battle fleets of the Royal Navy. The men who would comprise the first tier of senior Canadian naval officers in 1945 - Admirals P.W. Nelles, G.C. Jones and L.W. Murray, Commodores V.G. Brodeur, H.E. Reid and C.R.H. Taylor, and Captains H.T.W. Grant and F.L. Houghton - had been in the RCN for virtually the entire 35 years of its existence. Their formative experience was gaining an appreciation of the capabilities of vessels larger than destroyers, and a confidence in their own ability to operate them.

⁵² Hadley and Sarty, Tin-Pots & Pirate Ships, pp. 89-90, and 268-269. Tucker, Naval Service of Canada, Vol. I, details *Rainbow*'s escapades (her captain was Walter Hose, a future Chief of the Naval Staff) at pp. 262-282; he politely dissembles *Hochelaga*'s encounter, failing to mention that vessel by name, and stating merely that “when at last [German submarines] came their behaviour was passive and discreet” (p. 253).

⁵³ Sarty, “Hard-Luck Flotilla: The RCN's Atlantic Coast Patrol, 1914-18,” in The RCN in Retrospect, pp. 101-125.

They also learned early that attempts to construct from scratch a viable force, however modest, in the shadow of victory were easily cast aside in the interest of postwar retrenchment. In 1919, in advance of a tour of Dominion navies by Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa, Prime Minister Borden suggested that "It might be possible for the Canadian Government to... take over a fleet unit consisting, let us say, of a battleship, certain large and small cruisers, with the necessary quota of destroyers and submarines."⁵⁴ Interestingly, the naval staff was cautious about immediately accepting ships from the Admiralty according to some "haphazard principle," and instead struck a Naval Committee to produce a series of "Occasional Papers" as a planning basis.⁵⁵ Perhaps the most important of the staff analyses was the second, entitled "Proposals for Canadian Naval Expansion,"⁵⁶ which envisioned the creation of a 46-ship navy, over two longer seven-year building periods (1920-27 and 1927-34), consisting finally of seven cruisers, twelve destroyers, eighteen anti-submarine patrol craft, three submarines and three tenders, all to be manned by 8,500 officers and men. It specifically rejected capital ships as being beyond the resources of Canadian shipyards and the numbers of senior Canadian officers to command them. Although this became the basis of Lord Jellicoe's report, he

⁵⁴ Borden to Lord Milner, 18 April 1919, as quoted in Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, I, p. 151.

⁵⁵ NAC, RG 24, vol 5696, NSS 1017-31-2, "Occasional Papers, 1919-1921."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, "Occasional Paper No. 2: Proposals for Canadian Naval Expansion," 3 July 1919.

regrettably presented it in terms of the old fleet unit notion as to the advisability of eventually including battlecruisers and also aircraft carriers.⁵⁷

Borden's ruminations aside, this was too bold an expansion of a navy which consisted of only a few trawler-size vessels and for which there existed no clearly demonstrable need, especially as a postwar recession was heightening concern over the accumulated war debt. Even a scaled-down version of Jellicoe's plan was rebuked by Cabinet, and in the ensuing commotion Kingsmill resigned as Director of the Naval Service. He was replaced by Commodore Walter Hose, an RN officer who had commanded *Rainbow*, but upon transferring to the RCN in 1912 soon proved to be as alive to Canadian sensitivities as his predecessor (he was principal author of the "Occasional Paper" series). The Naval Committee plan, if read carefully, stressed a gradual build-up, but now Hose set about re-establishing the RCN on even a more modest scale. He convinced the government to accept a gift from the Royal Navy of three relatively modern ships - the cruiser *Aurora* and destroyers *Patriot* and *Patrician* - which at 3,500 tons and 1,000 tons respectively were smaller and more conducive to training than had been *Rainbow* and *Niobe*. The junior Canadian officers came home from their RN apprenticeship to take up appointments in these vessels, and for the better part of two years, the navy was able to cling to the pretense of a small but efficient force.

This was the navy into which was recruited the next generation of officers, who would prove themselves in operational command and as staff officers in the Second

⁵⁷ Report of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Jellicoe of Scapa on Naval Mission to the Dominion of Canada (November - December, 1919), (3 vols) (His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1919). *passim*.

World War: Captains E.R. Mainguy, H.G. DeWolf, H.N. Lay, G.R. Miles, and K.F. Adams. It came to an end in 1923, however, when, in the spirit of the Washington Conference on Naval Disarmament, the government ordered significant cuts in the defence establishment. Hose's response was revolutionary: he promptly paid off *Aurora*, closed the naval college, cut the permanent force establishment to 500 officers and men, kept only the two destroyers and a handful of trawlers in commission as training vessels, and poured all of his resources into the establishment of a baker's dozen companies of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve (the RCNVR), spread amongst major cities throughout the Dominion.⁵⁸

The fleet structure chosen by Hose was itself not without consequence. In a world in which power was determined by numbers of battleships and cruisers, destroyers were not the natural basis for a naval force.⁵⁹ However, Hose's wartime experience as Captain of the East Coast Patrols had shown that "destroyers were the smallest true fighting ships that would give the Canadian service independent striking power should a future war

⁵⁸ The most incisive analysis of Hose's reorganization concludes that he "made the difficult but necessary choice between what we might now call institutional viability and operational capability." See Robert (Bill) McKillip, "Staying on the Sleigh: Commodore Walter Hose and a Permanent Naval Policy for Canada," in Maritime Warfare Bulletin / Bulletin de guerre maritime: Special Historical Edition (Proceedings of the Maritime Command Historical Conference, 1990, "Canada's Navy: Continuity or Change"), p. 74.

⁵⁹ R.H. Caldwell, "The RCN, the Battle of the Atlantic, and Command Relations, October 1942 - April 1943" (unpublished DHH Naval History Team Narrative No. 10, 1 April 1998), has an introductory section (pp. 8-15) which neatly synthesizes what he calls, "The Centralizing Imperative in RN Thought," embodied in the perennial call to the Dominion navies that they be equipped with cruisers to patrol the imperial trade routes.

bring further surprises.”⁶⁰ To save the RCN from a withering extinction, Hose had adopted essentially the structure envisioned in the 1905 Naval Militia scheme and proposed again by Kingsmill in 1909, thereby keeping it firmly in line with the thinking of the most influential member of the Canadian political class of that era - Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. King’s notion of a Canadian navy in 1923 - as it was in 1908 and would be again in 1936 and in 1945 - was precisely that of Laurier:⁶¹ a force to exert a national presence (what would today be called “sovereignty”) but not at the expense of other national priorities. To this end, it had to be neither large, nor long-legged, nor overtly powerful. But it did have to exist, and possess a certain degree of credibility. As Roger Sarty has observed, “Mackenzie King’s Liberals... were delighted to have [in Hose] a professional sailor who did not toe the Admiralty line.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Sarty, Canada and the Battle of the Atlantic (Montréal: Art Global, 1998), p. 28.

⁶¹ This raises an interesting question of memory, specifically who of the principle characters remembered what about the pre-1910 period? Mackenzie King would remember it from his perspective as a protégée of Laurier. Hose, who only arrived in Canada in the fall of 1910 as an officer in *Rainbow*, would know little of the pre-1909 Canadian roots of the service, and instead would be familiar with Fisher’s discredited fleet unit scheme. This is confirmed by his version of the history of the RCN, as recorded in one of the series of “occasional papers” which Hose, as Deputy Director of the Naval Service, had a significant hand in preparing for the visit of Lord Jellicoe in 1919. See NSS 1017-31-2, “Occasional Paper No. 3: History of Canadian Naval Expansion,” 3 July 1919.

It is entirely further possible that the problematical version of the origins of the RCN recorded by Tucker - who had no links to the service prior to his retention as official historian in 1942 - derived from this same paper. Confusingly, Nelles (the wartime CNS) had joined in 1908 to be a cadet in CGS *Canada*, and his remembrance should be closer to that of King, but he appears not to have attempted to correct Tucker’s appreciation - perhaps his incomplete youthful perspective was clouded by subsequent developments.

⁶² Sarty, Canada and the Battle of the Atlantic, p. 28.

Nelles, Jones, Grant and their peers experienced once again the heartache of the occasionally rising, but mostly falling fortunes of the RCN. Forever embedded in their memories was an appreciation of how the failure to properly establish a Canadian Navy from the outset had resulted in a fleet which could not materially contribute to victory in the Great War. Attempts to construct a viable force, however modest, after the Armistice were easily cast aside in the interest of postwar retrenchment. The few billets in the remaining ships and the constricted headquarters and reserve companies offered limited challenges for the professional advancement of regular Canadian sailors, let alone the experience to equip them to properly train reservists. At the same time, the virtual elimination of Royal Navy officers from the national command structure did not lead to the Canadianization of the service. Arrangements again were made with the RN to continue regular tours for officers in British warships, and all ranks benefited from training courses available only in the United Kingdom. Ironically, as Sarty again has shown, "the truncation of the RCN in the 1920s to emphasize its national rather than Imperial role, rendered the service more dependent than ever on Admiralty support."⁶³ Although the fleet unit obviously was not a viable Canadian option, exposure to its embodiment in the Royal Navy put the RCN in stark contrast to that service, and made the British model the one for young officers to emulate. They were determined not to be condemned to repeat their own history.

This was essentially the structure of the RCN upon the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939. Mackenzie King had allowed modest expansion of the fleet through the 1930s,

⁶³ Sarty, "Canadian Naval Policy, 1860-1939," unpublished DHH Narrative [n.d.], p. 80.

as the threat of conflict between Japan and the United States led to a growing probability that Canada would have to mount neutrality patrols on the West Coast. When two aging destroyers were retired at the end of 1936, it must have been with his original 1908 assessment of the need for a Canadian navy in mind that King authorized their immediate replacement by two newer surplus RN destroyers. Subsequent budgets envisioned the purchase of four more such ships by 1940 as a central element of Canadian rearmament.⁶⁴ Slow but steady seemed finally to be winning the day, and the first “Canadian” CNS, Rear-Admiral Percy Nelles (he had joined as a cadet in 1908 and succeeded Hose in 1934) dared to capitalize upon this in January 1939 with a statement of the “Objectives of the Canadian Naval Service.”⁶⁵ In any future conflict, he explained, the RCN’s primary responsibility would be coast defence. While cruisers were the best forces against surface raiders, their cost and personnel and maintenance requirements placed them beyond Canada’s means. There existed a perfect alternative, however, in the form of the new class of “pocket cruisers” being commissioned just then by the Royal Navy: the *Tribal*-class of fleet destroyers. Nelles proposed that a flotilla of six *Tribals* on each coast would provide “reasonable Naval defence.” Underlying his thinking was the determination that, if war was inevitable, it also was wise to insure against a recurrence of previous

⁶⁴ Sarty, “‘Entirely in the hands of the friendly neighbour’,” *MDC*, pp. 98-104; and “Mr King and the Armed Forces: Rearmament and Mobilization, 1937-1939,” *ibid.*, pp. 114ff. Interestingly for this dissertation, these included the four ships of an earlier *Crescent*-class, completed in 1932 and renamed the *River*-class for service in the RCN (see **Figure 5**, “British-design Destroyers in RCN Service, 1905-1970”).

⁶⁵ NAC, RG 24, vol 3844, NSS 1017-10-34, 17 January 1939. Tellingly, this file is entitled “Defence of Canada, Schemes & Plans - Post War Objectives of the RCN.”

retrenchment experiences “by acquiring warships too valuable to scrap.”⁶⁶ If somewhat opportunistic, it nonetheless struck a chord with the Mackenzie King government: even if no orders were immediately forthcoming in the 1939-40 estimates, the Minister of National Defence, Ian Mackenzie, signalled concurrence in acknowledging to Parliament that “the ultimate objective that the navy has set for Canada is to build up a force of eighteen destroyers” - by implication, the six *Rivers* already in service, plus the twelve *Tribals*.⁶⁷

It has become *de rigueur* to criticize the Canadian Naval Staff for using the war shamelessly “to build up a force of modern warships... to be kept on as a permanent peacetime navy on a much larger scale than before 1939.”⁶⁸ The appearance in the dark days of the fall of 1940 of a policy paper on “Canada’s Post-War Navy”⁶⁹ invariably is presented as evidence of this determination. The analysis was peppered with the language of classic imperial defence of the trade routes, maintaining that the core of the fleet should be four cruisers and eighteen destroyers, and the only apparent allowance for the new wartime situation being a modest acceptance of the requirement for anti-submarine (A/S) vessels (ten on each coast, plus another 20 in reserve). To be sure, this view to the long-term was coloured by the unhappy past of the RCN. But this document

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; and Whitby, “Instruments of Security,” p. 3.

⁶⁷ House of Commons Debates, 16 May 1939, p. 4129; and, Whitby, “Instruments of Security,” p. 3.

⁶⁸ DHH, NHS 1650-1, vol “Miscellaneous Research Notes on RN,” “Report of discussion on Defence of shipping in Canadian waters,” 26-29 January 1940.

⁶⁹ NSS 1017-10-34, “Canada’s Post-War Navy,” November 1940.

must also be considered in the context of the times in which it was produced: the German Navy had only just taken possession of forward French and Norwegian bases, the U-boat threat to the North Atlantic lifeline had not yet materialised, and the removal of Britain from the war, either by invasion or a separate peace, was a not unreasonable proposition.⁷⁰ There continued, therefore, to be a plausible need in the near-term for a strong coast defence navy to ensure Canadian security against the possibilities of either an unrestrained German High Seas Fleet, whether belligerent or neutral, or a too-paternalistic hemispheric protection offered by the United States Navy.

Both of these scenarios were entirely consistent with Mackenzie King's view of a Canadian naval force. As such, the November 1940 paper (prepared by the Director of Plans, Commander F.L. Houghton) remained the basis of government-approved naval planning. In addition to the four *Tribals* already building in Britain, in May 1941 the Cabinet War Committee approved two to be built in Canadian shipyards, and two more would be authorized early in 1942.⁷¹ After some debate, early in 1941, the Naval Staff convinced the wartime Minister for the Naval Service, Angus L. Macdonald, both to

⁷⁰ NHS 1650-1, vol 2, "Naval Appreciation: Canada's War Effort During 1941," 6 October 1940; and, DHH, PJBD (Permanent Joint Board on Defence) Journal, Volume I, "Joint Canadian-United States Basic Defence Plan - 1940," 10 October 1940. This latter plan was an immediate consequence of the establishment of the PJBD as part of the Ogdensburg Agreement of August 1940. Also known as "Basic Plan No. 1" or "Plan Black", it was put together with some urgency to meet the situation that would arise "if Great Britain is overrun by the Axis Powers or if the British Navy ceases to control the North Atlantic." See also C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970), p. 349.

⁷¹ Whitby. "Instruments of Security," p. 6.

increase the authorized strength of the RCN to 771 officers and 7781 ratings⁷² and to sanction the re-establishment of a Canadian Naval College, HMCS *Royal Roads*.⁷³ When the U-boat threat did arise at about this time, however, the Naval Staff quickly changed its priorities. Talk of cruisers was suspended in favour of the need to build and man “a new type of ocean escort” (which came to be known as the frigate),⁷⁴ recruiting into the RCN was restricted after mid-1941 in favour of the RCNVR, and *Royal Roads* was given over to RCNVR officer training for the better part of the next two years. Still, in November 1941, with Britain’s survival remaining very much in the balance, the long term process was taken a step further with the recommendation “that consideration should be given to the formation of a ‘POST-WAR PLANNING COMMITTEE’”⁷⁵

The war effort in western Europe and the long-term prospects of Britain were only revitalized by the official entry of the United States on 7 December 1941. Even as the war expanded into a global conflict, with active American participation the inevitability

⁷² NAC, RG 24, vol 5586, NSS 1-24-1, vol 4, CNS to Minister, “RCN Complement,” 22 October 1940 (see Appendix 2, “RCN Personnel Strength, 1939-1955”).

⁷³ See William Anthony March, “The Evolution of a College: HMCS *Royal Roads*, 1940-1948” (University of Victoria, unpublished MA thesis, 1993), pp. 56-61ff; and, Glover, “Officer Training and the Quest for Operational Efficiency,” pp. 76-79 and 93-101.

⁷⁴ Tucker, *Vol II*, pp. 65-66ff.

⁷⁵ NSS 1017-10-34, “Memorandum on Post-War Planning,” 17 November 1941. In an unrelated sense, the RCN is usually characterized as being rather halting in its progress towards bilingualism. When Houghton suggested that the proposed committee should take “as its motto” the short title “PPC”, some wag (possibly commenting on the immediate utility of such staff effort) pencilled in the margin that this might stand for “pour prendre congé”.

of allied victory, however distant, became certain.⁷⁶ Deprived of the impetus for independent action, a brake was finally applied to Canadian postwar planning. When in May 1942 the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS), Commodore H.E. Reid, reviewed the November 1941 memorandum recommending postwar planning, he minuted it back with the comment that, "I am in entire agreement with your [recommendation on the establishment of a PPC] - The Rehabilitation Committees are already at work and have covered considerable ground." At the same time, however, he noted, "I find it very difficult to see how we can plan a post war navy now.... I agree it is a big problem which should be kept in mind and the Planning organisation formed the moment signs of peace are in evidence."⁷⁷

For all the new hopefulness in the allied cause, the RCN was still very much at war. The VCNS had taken some six months to get around to reviewing - and then dismissing - what might be considered a seminal proposition simply because he was otherwise preoccupied. as the rapid but poorly coordinated expansion of the RCN in the first two years of the war approached crisis proportions. A half-century later, historians are still engaged in a reassessment of the Canadian Navy's performance in the Second World War. The sometimes fierce debate is driven by the knowledge that the convoy escort effort in the North Atlantic was critical to the outcome of the war, yet less than spectacular in its immediate results. Whether or not this was due to institutional

⁷⁶ Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Volume III: The Grand Alliance (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), pp. 606-607.

⁷⁷ NSS 1017-10-34. VCNS (Cmdre H.E. Reid) minute, 12 May 1942.

constraints - the ill-preparedness of the embryonic pre-war NSHQ to direct a near 25-fold expansion of the service, the predilection of naval officers as men of action to willingly (if not eagerly) accept more commitments than could realistically be managed, the failures of the training, manning and maintenance systems to produce the right types of men and equipment to bring operational stability to vessels on the frontline - remains the subject of debate amongst historians.⁷⁸ It is only deepened by the fact that it was the Corvette Navy of the RCNVR which appeared to bear the brunt of all these shortcomings. The destroyer navy of the straight-stripe RCN continued to perform with distinction in exactly the fashion anticipated by its seniors: initially, in defence of the trade routes off the East Coast; after May 1940, alongside the Royal Navy in European waters, covering the withdrawal from France and standing-by to counter an invasion; following this, as the senior ships commanding convoy escort groups, giving guidance to the hastily-assembled collections of reservists in the corvettes; and then, after acceptance of the first *Tribal* in November 1942 and the remainder through 1943, in bringing the war to the enemy.

The very fact that expansion was being accomplished as promised, whatever the pains along the way, was a source of great pride to senior Canadian officers. By the

⁷⁸ For the more recent accounts on different elements of the RCN's war, see variously: Marc Milner, North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys (U of T Press, 1985), which details the period 1939-1943, and its sequel, The U-Boat Hunters: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Offensive against Germany's Submarines (U of T Press, 1994), covering the final two years, 1943-1945. David Zimmerman, The Great Naval Battle of Ottawa (U of T Press, 1989), looks at "How admirals, scientists, and politicians impeded the development of high technology in Canada's wartime navy" (dust-jacket). The publication by the Directorate of History and Heritage of the official operational history of the RCN has been continually delayed as its authors grapple with the immensity of these and other issues, in the face of continued budget cuts.

summer of 1943. the fortunes of the RCN had improved considerably, reflecting the general improvement in the allied situation: the Germans had been evicted from North Africa and the invasion of Sicily promised a toe-hold into Italy, the Russians were advancing along the Eastern Front, and the U-boats appeared to have been defeated in the critical convoy battles earlier that spring. An assault on Northwest Europe in 1944 was a certainty, leaving only the defeat of Japan to be undertaken, and the Canadian Naval Staff saw it as only natural that the RCN should play an active part in both these upcoming operations. A major re-shuffling of the senior leadership of the RCN in September 1942 had brought Rear-Admiral G.C. Jones to NSHQ as VCNS. Working in concert with a few well-chosen, experienced staff officers, Jones ushered in what one student has styled "The Golden Age of Canadian Naval Planning."⁷⁹ The preparations of this group for the First Quebec Conference in August 1943 brought a whole new dynamic to Canadian postwar naval planning.

To senior officers weaned on the experiences of the First World War and the privations of the inter-war years, it mattered immensely that the RCN had not figured prominently in any of the string of allied victories in the latest global struggle. The record on the North Atlantic was recognized even then as somewhat mixed, and at any rate, not unlike the East Coast Patrols of the Great War, not the stuff upon which to build a permanent peacetime establishment. The Pacific war held greater promise in this regard, as its vast oceanic reaches ordained it to be a predominantly naval war, but one different

⁷⁹ R.H. Caldwell, "The Golden Age of the [NSHQ] Naval Plans Division, April - December 1943" (unpublished DHH Naval History Team Narrative No. 6), 3 February 1997.

from that against Germany, since Japanese submarines did not pose the same threat against allied lines of communication. Rather, the large Japanese surface fleet still represented the classic naval adversary against which Canadian pre-war planning had been premised, and which presumably should guide planning in a postwar world. This was precisely the connection made by Lieutenant-Commander (RCNVR) G.F. Todd, a subordinate officer in the fertile plans section of the Canadian Naval Staff when, in anticipation of the Quebec Conference, he prepared an "Appreciation of RCN Ship Requirements for the War Against Japan and for the Post-War Navy."⁸⁰

It is not necessary to dwell on the details of this and subsequent RCN postwar balanced fleet planning, since Todd's paper is generally taken as the starting point for studies of the subject, and the ground through the end of the war has been well documented by Douglas, Hennessy, Sarty, Cafferky, Glover, and Pile, among others.⁸¹ Still, the context in which Todd's paper was prepared has generally been less closely studied and therefore demands review in several respects. Firstly, rather than being a fresh start, apart from the depth and clarity of its analysis (Todd was a Rhodes Scholar), this July 1943 proposal was not terribly different from those put forward by Nelles in 1939 and by Houghton in 1940 and 1941.⁸² Todd specifically precluded acquisition of

⁸⁰ NSS 1017-10-34, Director of Plans [Todd] to ACNS, 29 July 1943.

⁸¹ All *op. cit.*, except Roger Sarty, "The Ghosts of Fisher and Jellicoe: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Quebec Conferences" (unpublished DHH Naval History Narrative [no date]).

⁸² Nor, it should be noted, had the subject been ignored in the intervening years. Two important discussion papers to be found in NSS 1017-10-34, vol 1, are: one dated 15 December 1941, known as "The Halifax Paper," prepared by a group of officers on the

battleships as being “beyond the resources of the RCN”, and while he left the matter open as to procurement of aircraft carriers (“It may supersede the battleship as queen of the seas”), he “suggested that it is in the provision of cruisers that the RCN can render most valuable assistance.”⁸³

Secondly, the Naval Staff must be credited for recognizing that conditions were ripe for the resumption of postwar planning. Strategically, although the Battle of the Atlantic was far from over, the eventual defeat of Germany was becoming a foregone conclusion, and the large numbers of frigates building in Canadian shipyards to be commissioned over the next year could reasonably be expected to contain any new outbreak of the U-boat menace. By mid-1943, mobilization of the Canadian economy had reached the state where finally there existed the manpower and industrial base to sustain a larger and more complex fleet establishment. Tangible proof of this was an expanded and better-organized NSHQ, which was beginning to sort out the personnel and equipment problems attending expansion, and which was capable of producing insightful planning such as Todd’s.

staff of then-Commodore Jones (COAC), including Commander H.G. DeWolf, who would follow Jones to NSHQ as Director of Plans (and as such would guide Todd’s work); and, another dated 10 May 1942, submitted by Pay Sub-Lieutenant (RCNVR) J.S. Hodgson, entitled “Post-war Naval Problems.” Both are remarkable for the facts that their primary authors were Volunteer Reservists, and that they identified the need to support Canada’s growing international stature as being amongst the factors which should shape the structure of a postwar fleet.

⁸³ Todd to ACNS, 29 July 1943, pp. 4-5. He offered no specific numbers in this appreciation, other than that the nucleus of the force should be a squadron of four cruisers.

Most critical, however, was that in mid-1943 the RCN enjoyed unprecedented political support. As Bob Caldwell has observed, where the Canadian Army and the RCAF were participating in allied wartime endeavours far removed from Canadian political aims and goals - respectively, the Mediterranean strategy and the Combined Bombing Offensive - in the Battle of the Atlantic, the Navy fought and exercised strategic command in waters of direct Canadian interest.⁸⁴ Caldwell's work also has opened one other avenue of research. Through 1943-1945 the Canadian Government constituted its first-ever strategic planning cell, in the form of the Post-Hostilities Planning (PHP) Committee, chaired by the formidable Hume Wrong from the Department of External Affairs and comprising representatives from each of the three services. Where the army and the air force sometimes presented less than coherent recommendations, Wrong invariably was impressed by the naval submissions, developed by Todd and ushered through by the secretary of the PHP Committee, another naval officer, Commander (RCNVR) D.K. MacTavish.⁸⁵ Todd was astute enough to recognize the increasing influence of the mandarins in the Department of External Affairs, encouraged by Canada's growing international stature, and to appeal to this in his analyses. In recommending that a cruiser squadron form the backbone of Canadian participation in the Pacific, he commented that "it certainly is not fitting that the Second Navy of the Empire

⁸⁴ R.H. Caldwell, "The Government's Planning Dilemma and the Canadian Naval Service in 1943-44" (unpublished DHH Naval History Narrative, 18 March 1997), Introduction, p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, *passim*, especially Part I, pp. 18-21, 36-37, 45 n. 84, and Part II, pp. 2-3.

should be a mere spectator on such a vital occasion.”⁸⁶ His following appreciation of postwar requirements also was built in part upon the evidence of Canada’s increasing expectation of “recognition as a growing power in world affairs. ... To obtain the prestige and recognition of status which it thus seeks, it is essential that Canada should have as strong a Navy as possible.”⁸⁷ For its part, the foreign policy establishment was undergoing a fundamental shift of direction. Recognizing the limits of the pre-war policy of isolationism, it was developing a policy of commitment to collective security as the basis for the postwar international order. Preaching to this new mantra in March 1943, a member of the Canadian legation in Washington, Lester Pearson, made the remarkably prescient observation. “A bomb dropped on a Chinese village echoes across the St Lawrence.”⁸⁸ Reaction to such situations necessarily required military force with global reach, which in those days only a navy could provide. After 1945, in the lean years of postwar retrenchment, the Naval Staff - seeing a renewal of the experience of the interwar years in their apparent peacetime isolation from power - may not have fully appreciated it, but the fact was that, by 1943, the RCN had become part of the Ottawa political scene.

In the wake of the Quebec Conference, through the fall of 1943, Todd’s initial proposal took further shape. It is in assuming the form familiar to historians, however, with the addition of several new factors which came to impact upon the balanced force

⁸⁶ Todd to ACNS, 29 July 1943, p. 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁸ Quoted in W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 273.

concept. that confusion with the British fleet unit has become entrenched. The most crucial development was the RCN's loss of favour with Mackenzie King. When the Prime Minister was made aware of possible collusion at the Quebec Conference by his Naval Staff with British officers in the acquisition of major warships on loan, he sensed an imperial plot motivating the postwar ambitions of the RCN. Coming in conjunction with a crisis over the failure of NSHQ to refit Canadian escorts with modern equipment, this development hastened the removal in December 1943 of Nelles as CNS (ironically, he was sent to London as Senior Naval Representative) and his replacement by Jones, an even stronger advocate of a large balanced fleet and a personal friend of Minister Macdonald. It is all the more significant then that "King made no effort to reverse the big ship projects that were already underway."⁸⁹ By 1943, "the dramatic successes of... aircraft carriers in fleet operations in all theatres... suggested that no navy of the future would be truly capable without an aviation component."⁹⁰ If officers of the RCN were by no means immune to this impulse, neither could politicians afford to ignore it. Even as Nelles was effectively being fired, Todd was completing a paper arguing that Canadian political and naval objectives in the Pacific war could be realized by the "Provision of two Canadian Task Forces, each consisting of 2 cruisers, one Light Fleet Aircraft carrier, and one flotilla of Fleet destroyers."⁹¹ With the RN experiencing difficulties manning the large number of warships nearing completion in British yards, he submitted among other

⁸⁹ Sarty, "The Ghosts of Fisher and Jellicoe," pp. 17-22 (the quote is from p. 22).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁹¹ NHS 1650-1, "Creation of RCN Task Forces," 14 January 1944.

recommendations “That it be proposed to [the] Admiralty that the RCN take over and man the 8 ‘Crescent’ class destroyers now under construction in the UK.”⁹²

Over the course of 1944 and 1945, the Canadian Government debated the size of its commitment to the war against Japan, and by extension that of its postwar forces. On 22 September 1944, the RCN submitted its plan to the Cabinet War Committee, calling for some 20,000 men afloat and another 30,000 ashore, with a fleet of 2 cruisers, 2 light fleet carriers, 25 destroyers, 54 frigates, 12 corvettes, 12 *Algerine*-class minesweepers and the three *Prince*-class armed merchant ships.⁹³ Prime Minister Mackenzie King, ever wary of entangling military commitments, managed to scale these plans back somewhat, but only in degree. In July 1945, with the war in Europe finally over, the first carrier (HMCS *Warrior*) was soon to be commissioned, the cruiser HMCS *Uganda* was on operations in the Pacific, and the Naval Staff still envisioned the “Continuing Royal Canadian Navy” comprising 2 light fleet carriers, 4 light cruisers and 18 fleet destroyers, split equally between the East and West Coasts, and some 20,000 men, which would allow for a 50:50 sea-shore ratio.⁹⁴ As Alec Douglas has so aptly put it, “[b]y 1945 [the RCN] had most of the capabilities of a well-balanced modern fleet and ambitions to match.”⁹⁵

⁹² *Ibid.*; and. “History of Negotiations for Acquisition of Light Fleet Aircraft Carriers and Flotilla of Fleet Destroyers,” 25 April 1945.

⁹³ King Papers, vol. 425, Cabinet War Committee minutes, 22 September 1944.

⁹⁴ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 610, NSS 1818-3, vol 1, DoP to CNS, 23 July 1945.

⁹⁵ Douglas, “Conflict and Innovation,” p. 210.

The celebrations of V-J Day, 15 August 1945, signalling Japanese acceptance of Allied demands for unconditional surrender, were marked by His Majesty's Canadian Ship *Crescent* still in the final phases of fitting out for service with the British Pacific Fleet. Indeed, with

Crescent's commissioning ceremony set for 10 September, the formal signing of the Japanese surrender on the 2nd found the destroyer not yet officially on the books of the RCN (see **Figure 8**).⁹⁶

Where a protracted Pacific campaign had promised an

orderly transition to a large, balanced and capable postwar structure, fleet planning was suddenly thrown into flux. It was not the worst nightmare of the Naval Staff - at least the embryo of the planned fleet had been hatched - but the future of the postwar RCN was far from assured. The planning figure approved by Cabinet of 10,000 men was based on the somewhat haphazard principle that this was the smallest estimate previously put forward

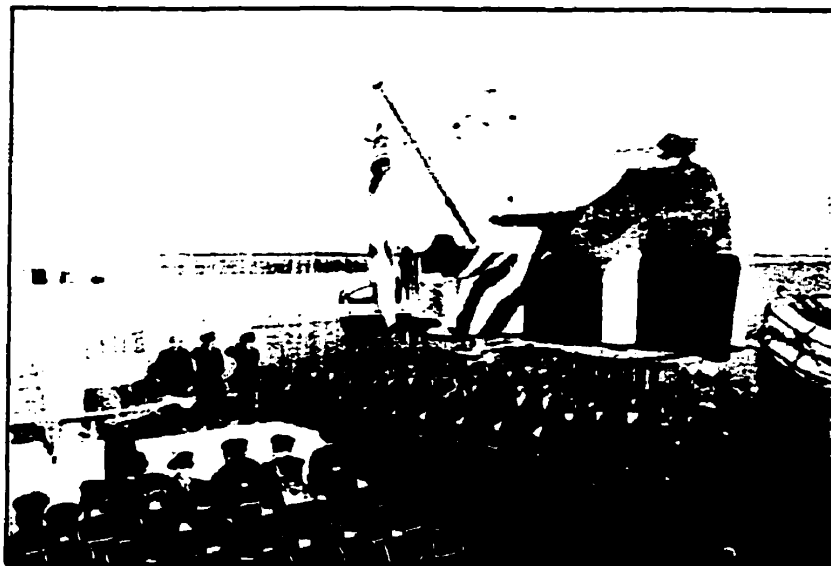


Figure 8: The White Ensign is raised in HMCS *Crescent* for the first time, on the occasion of her commissioning (in the pouring rain) on 10 September 1945. (Photo courtesy of her captain, LCdr Pat Nixon [on saluting dais, right].)

⁹⁶ *Crescent*, "Report of Proceedings [for September 1945]," 1 October 1945.

by the Naval Staff.⁹⁷ However small that personnel figure, even it was problematic. On 6 September, the Director of Plans had to advise the Chief of Naval Staff that the recruiting situation was such that, since “The RCN now consists of [only] 3,800, mostly officers and senior ratings..., it is recommended that an interim policy be adopted of endeavouring to man three heavy ships only.”⁹⁸ The carrier and two cruisers already in commission should remain in service, on loan, along with the first two *Crescents*, but the commitment to man a second carrier and the remaining fleet destroyers should be given up and all other ships paid off into reserve until “circumstances permit.” These, he concluded, were contingent upon “a declaration of Government Policy” and “the manpower available to the RCN being accurately known.”⁹⁹ Neither of these were made clearer when the latest Minister of the Naval Service, Bud Abbott, rose in the House of Commons on 22 October 1945 to give a speech on demobilization:

I am not in a position nor do I propose to make any definite statement as to the exact disposition of our available ships between the east coast and the west coast. I will say this, however, that Canada is a two-coast country and certainly we have to operate a two-coast navy. ... If [you] will look at the mathematical total of our ships [you] will see that by and large the figures I have given can be readily divided by two. ...

We have four Tribals now in operation and three now being constructed..., the final one will be completed in 1947. We have two of

⁹⁷ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 610, NSS 11818-1, “Minutes of the 9th Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Post Hostilities Problems,” 31 July 1945; and, *ibid.*, “Royal Canadian Navy Future Planning - to 1956,” 4 November 1946 (“Review of Post-war Planning to Date”).

⁹⁸ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 455, NSS 1650-26, Part 1, “Employment of Canadian Naval Forces, DoP to CNS, “Conversations with Admiralty concerning Carriers and Destroyers,” 6 September 1945.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

the V-class fleet destroyers; we have two Crescents, one of which is in Kingston in Jamaica, to-day and on her way to the west coast, while the other... will be commissioned very shortly....

At the outset those units to which I referred..., the two cruisers, two light fleet carriers, and ten destroyers, with the usual auxiliary craft such as frigates and minesweepers in reserve, I think constitute a good, workable little fleet to start with.¹⁰⁰

Abbott's naval advisers were to be proven far more accurate in their bleak expectations. Attempts to entice "hostilities only" officers and men to transfer to the permanent force for at least the interim period (until September 1947) met with mixed success. The demobilization process engendered some confusion as to the actual strength of the RCN, but by 1 April 1946 it was assessed at 696 officers and 4,111 ratings,¹⁰¹ not even half of the authorized peacetime total. Over the winter of 1945-46, it was possible to man only four ships - the carrier *Warrior*, the cruiser *Uganda*, and the destroyers *Micmac* and *Crescent*. The Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel was predicting bleakly that "the training service will be our most important function for the next five years."¹⁰² Officially designated the "West Coast Training Destroyer," it was in exactly that capacity that *Crescent* would be kept active for the next three years.

Postwar developments at DND in general, and the Navy in particular, differed considerably from those at External. As Wrong, Pearson *et al* shifted focus to their

¹⁰⁰ House of Commons Debates, 22 October 1945, pp. 1367-68, "War and Demobilization Speech" by MND, Hon. Bud Abbott.

¹⁰¹ DND Annual Report (1947), p. 18.

¹⁰² NSS 1650-26, Part 1, Minute, ACNP [Cdr Medland], 11 September 1945. Medland would later be commanding officer of *Athabaskan* at the time of her incident at Mazatlan in March 1949.

peacetime activities, it was with only a vague awareness of the Navy's intentions for a balanced postwar fleet of carriers, cruisers, and destroyer flotillas. If, when Pearson became Secretary of State for External Affairs in the fall of 1948, his understanding of things naval was superficial, it was no more so than that of any other postwar Canadian politician, including the defence minister. Abbott's primary concern was demobilization, and he presided over this with such efficiency that his reward in the Cabinet shuffle of December 1946 was a move to Finance, where he promptly demanded further cuts in the defence budget. One measure of the government's general intention was that he and his fellow ministers responsible for the army and air force were replaced by a consolidated Minister of National Defence. Brooke Claxton had been an officer with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the Great War, and latterly Minister of National Health and Welfare (18 October 1944 - 11 December 1946). He had very little personal interest in the Navy and was more concerned with his mandate to obtain economies.

As if in confirmation, his appointment was followed early in the new year of 1947 by further retrenchment, when Cabinet imposed a 75 per cent ceiling on the 10,000-man establishment.¹⁰³ This had minimal direct effect on the RCN, which had only been able to commission one additional destroyer (*Nootka*), and whose personnel strength as of 31 March 1947 stood at 6,128 (860 officers and 5,268 ratings), but the psychological impact

¹⁰³ NSS 11818-1. "Extract of the 25th Meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee, 9 January 1947 - Service Programmes for 1947-48; Establishments." The new minister went so far as to venture that "[the Navy] should be organized essentially as a training force, thus permitting the number of ships to be reduced." The 75 per cent limit similarly was extended to the Army and the RCAF.

of apparent government disinterest in the services was numbing.¹⁰⁴ By the time Grant was appointed CNS in September 1947 - the predicted end of the interim period - general conditions of service were in such disarray that one of his first staff actions was to undertake a wide-ranging investigation into "Morale and Service Conditions". the results of which he passed to Minister Claxton in October 1947 (see Chapter 7).

Through 1948, as staff action progressed on many of the recommendations, the manning situation improved and four more ships were brought back into commission. By that summer, a programme was underway to refit in succession all of the *Tribals* with the Squid ahead-throwing A/S weapon. The same plan which foresaw these powerful ships becoming the mainstay of the destroyer fleet called for *Crescent*, the last of the emergency wartime ships, to be paid off into reserve early in the new year of 1949.¹⁰⁵ In the fall of 1948, meanwhile, formed groups from each of the Atlantic and Pacific fleets actually undertook extended training cruises, the first since the end of the war, respectively into Hudson's Bay and to Pearl Harbor, and it now seemed that the long-awaited combined Spring Cruise to the Caribbean would be a reality.

The Canadian fleet was being revitalized by late-1948. *Crescent's* withdrawal from service and the transfer of her crew to *Huron* on 1 March 1949 was supposed to be one of the final steps in this process of renewal. Funding and technical problems,

¹⁰⁴ Refer to Appendix 2, "RCN Strength, 1939-1955." and Appendix 3, "RCN - Ships in Commission, 1945-1955." This subject will be studied in greater depth in Chapter 6. Note that *Haida* would be commissioned in January 1947, but that so over-taxed the RCN that when *Micmac* suffered a collision in July 1947, she was not immediately replaced.

¹⁰⁵ NSS 1650-26, part 2, "Employment of HMC Ships and Carrier Air Groups, 1 October 1948 - 31 March 1949," 19 July 1948.

however, were conspiring to delay the Squid refits. In November, NSHQ revised the fleet employment plan such that *Crescent* would remain in service until 1 May 1949, when her crew would transfer to *Sioux*. Although another emergency construction ship, this "V"-class destroyer had been in reserve since the end of the war and was being converted to trial new habitability features, including fixed bunks and cafeteria messing.¹⁰⁶

Crescent's extended commission brought her a new commanding officer, Lieutenant-Commander Groos, on 16 November 1948. The change of command inspections - a standard review of a ship's books and equipment designed to ensure smooth and thorough turnovers - confirmed that the destroyer's time was past. Although the main engine machinery was still sound, the galley, the cool room and the messdeck ventilation were all condemned by the Command Medical Officer.¹⁰⁷ On reviewing the results, the Commander of the Pacific Destroyer Division was sufficiently alarmed that he "recommended that CRESCENT not be employed on [the upcoming Spring Cruise] nor any other service of a prolonged nature, nor one entering tropical waters." If the defects could not be made good, he continued, "...then there is the very real possibility of grave discontent in the ship which may result in breaches of naval discipline."¹⁰⁸ Groos, however, had spent most of the postwar period serving in the Directorate of Plans and Operations in NSHQ and was only too aware of the constraints on the Ottawa staff. He

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, "Brief on the Proposed Employment of HMC Ships for Fiscal Year 1949-50, [nd, November 1948?].

¹⁰⁷ NAC, RG 24, vol 11,388, NSS 8000-358/36, CO *Crescent* to FOPC, 12 November 1948.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, CCD(P) to FOPC, "Future of H.M.C.S. CRESCENT," 24 November 1948.

recognized that, “while it is the policy of the Naval Board to employ these austerity-built Emergency Wartime Programme ships in the role of Peacetime training ships, it is not the policy of Naval Board to expend funds unnecessarily upon their maintenance.”¹⁰⁹ This one had only a few months of useful service left, and, in the event, the full remedial repairs were not undertaken. On the morning of 28 January 1949, *Crescent* was ready to sail from Esquimalt harbour on a prolonged cruise to tropical waters.

* * *

The Royal Canadian Navy which Laurier established in 1910, and over which Mackenzie King had presided through his several ministries, had been deliberately kept on a modest scale such that the “imperial sentiment” and “unity of action” of which King had written in 1908 were balanced with “healthy Canadian national spirit”. The dynamics of the Second World War, however, had exposed the narrowness of many of his beliefs. For all their fundamental validity, by the time of his retirement, many of them were in need of revision. Just as the internationalism of St Laurent and Pearson was a break with the former prime minister’s isolationism, the evolution of Canadian naval force structure through the war demonstrates that the aspirations of Canadian naval planners for a large postwar naval force were a legitimate expression of national identity. The unhesitating decision to despatch *Crescent* to China is proof that the new breed of Canadian politicians were confident that they had in the postwar RCN precisely the type of naval force they required.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, CO *Crescent* to CCD(P), “Future of H.M.C.S. CRESCENT,” 20 November 1948.

Still, Grant knew that the fleet's readiness for operations was tenuous. As the Navy continued to suffer the at-best benign neglect of the government, the CNS concentrated upon seeing into fruition a number of much-needed improvements. He may not have been guilty of actively misrepresenting the state of the Navy - he had, after all, kept the Minister informed - but neither was he now willing, in January 1949, to openly share the travails of his Service with outsiders, especially those at External in their own hour of need. Besides, DEA was painting a picture of the deployment to China in the relatively favourable light of simply requiring a vessel to stand by for a possible evacuation. What could possibly go wrong?

Chapter 4: Canadian Gunboat

Crescent's captain, Lieutenant-Commander David Groos, learned of the change in destination the day before the Pacific Squadron's planned departure on the Spring Cruise, in a short, highly classified message from NSHQ:

Crescent's participation in Winter Exercises is cancelled. You are to prepare for Far Eastern deployment and proceed to Shanghai.... The purpose of your mission is to remain Top Secret until you have cleared harbour.¹

In the forenoon of 28 January 1949, as the other ships slowly filed out the harbour, Groos mustered his ship's company to share with them what little he knew. Within a few hours, he was on his way to Ottawa, to be briefed on the substance and expectations of the late arising mission. In his absence, the Executive Officer (second-in-command), Lieutenant Gerry Wood, supervised the off-loading of peacetime training matériel to make room for embarkation of the war stores, ammunition, and provisions required for a cruise of unspecified duration on a far-off, potentially hostile station. Already, a pierhead re-shuffling of crews had occurred, as a number of reservists embarked for training had been hurriedly landed in favour of a draft of twenty-five trained seamen from the departing cruiser, *Ontario* (see **Figure 9**).

¹ Birch-Jones, "HMCS *Crescent*... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," p. 13.

Groos arrived in Ottawa to find no less hectic a pace of preparations at NSHQ and External. After Cabinet gave approval in principle on the 25th, External's desk officer for the Far East Section, Arthur Menzies, had met with members of the Naval Staff over the



Figure 9: Sailors from *Crescent* stowing ship, January 1949 (NAC PA-204704).

course of the next three days to work out the details for the operations order and an accompanying press release. These officials agreed that a destroyer could indeed operate on the confined waters of the Yangtze more easily - and less expensively - than a cruiser, and still embark the predicted 500 evacuees for the short time and distance anticipated, especially as "the destroyer would be despatched with only a training crew aboard which represented two-thirds of the ship's full complement."² Menzies knew of a Chinese-Canadian, Bill Lore, who had served as a Special Branch officer in the RCNVR during the war, was proficient in both Cantonese and Mandarin, and should be embarked as an interpreter.³ He also underscored that "careful consideration" should be given to the

² DEA 366-H-40, Menzies to ER, 27 January 1949.

³ Neither of which, however, according to Lore, were commonly spoken in the Shanghai region, making the necessity of his presence questionable. See Lore, "The CRESCENT Episode, 1949," p. 3. This assertion by Lore is inexplicably misleading for, as the Maybees point out, "a Mandarin speaker can make himself understood in Shanghai without serious difficulty." Maybee to Gimblett, 27 October 1998.

wording of any signals to the British regarding command relationships, for, although “it would be necessary and desirable to cooperate very closely with the RN on such a cruise...., it would probably be politically unwise to have the captain placed directly under the command of the C-in-C of the British Pacific Fleet.”

At about the same time that Claxton made his official press announcement on 28 January, External advised Ambassador Davis that the unsolicited Canadian destroyer would soon be on its way.⁴ A similar notice the next day to the embassy in Japan drew the unexpected, yet in hindsight entirely predictable, reply that SCAP would not approve the entry of a Canadian warship into Japanese waters. This necessitated a drastic revision of *Crescent's* itinerary, amid a flurry of trans-Pacific messages: instead of proceeding by way of the relatively direct, and shorter, great circle route across the north Pacific (see map 1), the destroyer would leap-frog across the more southern, central Pacific by way of fuelling stops at the US Navy bases of Pearl Harbor, Kwajalein and Guam.⁵

The problem of command also remained to be resolved. During the Second World War, a special relationship recognizing the growing autonomy of the Dominion had evolved among the allied powers. This no longer formally held, and External was concerned that an agreement made at the Imperial Conference of 1911, when the Canadian Naval Service was only a year old, “Although outmoded, ... still forms the basis for cooperative action among ships of the United Kingdom, Canadian and Australian

⁴ DEA 366-H-40, Ottawa to Nanking, No. 13, 28 January 1949.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Ottawa to Tokyo, No. 16, 29 January 1949; Tokyo to Ottawa, No. 29, 1 February 1949; Ottawa to Tokyo, No. 19, 2 February 1949; and *passim*.

navies.”⁶ Certain of its provisions were “clearly unsuitable to modern conditions,” and they were the ones most likely to pertain in the present circumstances: the requirement for the commander of a Canadian warship to report to the British Admiralty while at a foreign port; that the British government “would instruct him as to the conduct of any international matters that may arise”; and that in matters of ceremonial the senior officer (in China, by default invariably the Briton) would have right of command. Perhaps anticipating these concerns, the British naval attaché in Nanking, contacted through Ambassador Davis and Third Secretary Maybee, provided assurances which downplayed the significance of these legal forms. The RN officer emphasized the logistical, communications and intelligence-sharing advantages of being placed under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief, Far East Station, and proposed that the ship only would be employed subject to the concurrence of the Canadian Ambassador. Apparently, Australian vessels had arrived recently in Shanghai and were operating under this procedure, being incorporated without difficulty into both the rotation at Nanking and the evacuation plans. Otherwise, the attaché advised, Canadian warships acting with complete independence still would receive “every assistance” but British Naval authorities “can accept no responsibility.”⁷

⁶ *Ibid.*, Memo to SSEA, “Command of Canadian Destroyer sent to China,” 31 January 1949. That such arrangements had never been formally re-negotiated stands in contrast to recent scholarship charting the role of the RCN in the expansion of Canadian autonomy. See Captain(N) Dan McNeil, “The Development of Canadian Foreign Policy: A Naval Dimension,” in Haydon and Griffiths, Canada’s Pacific Naval Presence.

⁷ DEA 366-H-40, Nanking to Ottawa, No. 38, 31 January 1949.

Complicating matters was the desire of Naval Service Headquarters to determine the degree of cooperation anticipated between American and British forces.⁸ NSHQ hoped for *Crescent* to obtain logistical support where possible from the US Navy, in accordance with an agreement reached prior to the exercises the previous autumn.⁹ However, at the political level a rift was developing between the two senior allies over the China question, and External itself was only just beginning to recognize this.¹⁰ The effective abdication of Chiang Kai-shek on 21 January coincided with the inauguration of Dean Acheson as Truman's new Secretary of State. The American administration now was "prepared to let U.S. involvement in the civil war trail off until the conflict had run its course."¹¹ Their navy continued with the evacuation of American nationals through Shanghai, but would be in no position to lend material aid to *Crescent* once she was in the region. There was no alternative to seeking assistance in the Far East from the RN.

In any practical sense, there could be little scope for an autonomous Canadian naval presence in Chinese waters. Nor did it matter, for the working relationship of the RCN with its senior British and American partners seemed to be evolving naturally and progressively from the cooperation which had become the norm during the recent war. Still, Canadian politicians remained obsessed by legal forms, especially the colonial

⁸ *Ibid.*, VCNS to A/U-SSEA, 2 February 1949.

⁹ *Ibid.*; and NAC, RG 25, vol 3394, file 366-F-440, "Reciprocal Arrangements for Provisions and Supplies and Emergency Repairs on Credit at Canadian and U.S. Navy Stations."

¹⁰ Beecroft. "The Recognition Problem," pp. 43-49.

¹¹ Marolda. "The U.S. Navy and the Chinese Civil War," pp. 75-78.

trappings of the 1911 agreement with Great Britain. Claxton fretted “about the continued observance of this rather obsolete agreement” and Pearson thought that it “might produce an undesirable impression on foreign governments.”¹² Ironically, if any undesirable impression was formed, it would be as a consequence of such bureaucratic quibbling. Although the operation plan which the Naval Staff passed to External was sparse in virtually every other matter, the VCNS included a covering letter confirming that the command arrangements were framed according to the intention that *Crescent* “should in normal circumstances act as an Independent Command... and that... the Commanding Officer should, taking into account the advice of the Ambassador, use his discretion as to the degree of cooperation in the general evacuation plan under the directing Authority”.¹³ The actual wording of “Operation Plan CANAVHED 1-49” was that “the Commanding Officer HMCS ‘CRESCENT’ should conform to the wishes and should act under the advice of the Canadian Ambassador to China.”¹⁴ NSHQ’s message of notification to the Admiralty, however, was couched in more polite terms: “It would be appreciated if CinC Far Eastern Fleet could fit [*Crescent*] into his overall evacuation plans... [and] keep the

¹² “Command of Canadian Destroyer sent to China,” 31 January 1949.

¹³ DEA 366-H-40, VCNS to A/U-SSEA, 2 February 1949.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Attached to this letter is the first page of “Operation Plan No. CANAVHED 1-49” [n.d., 29 January 1949]. The only complete remaining copy appears to be that provided to the Foreign Office, by way of the Admiralty, and filed on PRO, FO371/75938/F2862, Admiralty to Foreign Office, 22 February 1949. CANAVHED was the abbreviation for Canadian Naval Headquarters, a new acronym for NSHQ, necessitated by the adoption in 1947 of USN communications procedures.

Ambassador fully informed of his intentions in respect to [her] movements.”¹⁵ Together, these provided a set of directions sufficiently nebulous as practically to beg for clarification later.

Fully provisioned, with additional personnel embarked and her captain back from Ottawa briefed to the extent of available information, *Crescent* finally sailed from Esquimalt on 2 February, alone, for the 7,500

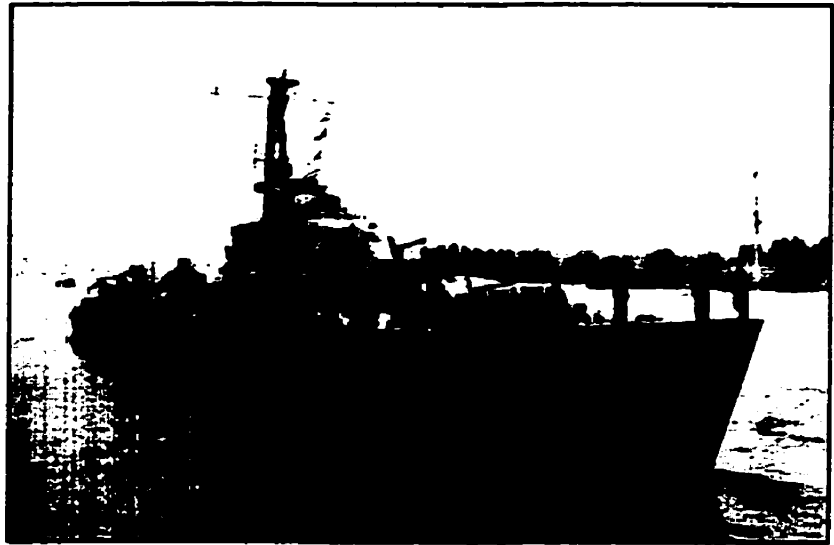


Figure 10: HMCS *Crescent* departing Esquimalt harbour, 2 February 1949 (NAC, PA-115389).

nautical mile voyage across the Pacific Ocean (see **Figure 10**). At the first fuelling stop, in Pearl Harbor, one rating had to be left behind in hospital, the result of a brawl with some American sailors who, according to one of *Crescent*'s crew, apparently mistook the Canadians for British, “and started calling us limeys and we had to use a little bit of force between us.”¹⁶ Otherwise, the trip was uneventful. The first edition of the ship's newspaper, “The CRESCENT Globetrotter,” appeared on 13 February, and over its short

¹⁵ PRO, FO371/75938/F2862/1611/10, message CANAVHED to Admiralty [info: various], 032002Z/February/1949.

¹⁶ Audette Papers, “Testimony *Crescent*”, p. 1692. One other sailor had to be returned from Shanghai due to compassionate family circumstances. See *Crowsnest*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (April 1949), p. 2.

run of ten mimeographed issues (the last was printed on 26 February, on the eve of arrival in Shanghai) it traced the parallel courses of the ship's passage across the Pacific and of a new crew slowly coming together.¹⁷ Each edition began with a tally of the miles steamed the previous day, miles to go to the next fuelling stop, and total mileage from Esquimalt. Announcements of activities planned for the next stops - "Picnic at Kwajalein", "Guam has the darndest crabs!" - were interspersed with details on "The Slow Boat Pool" lottery on the estimated time of return to Esquimalt ("it will be assumed the minimum duration of the cruise will be 6 weeks which would get us back say on the 16th of March") and news of "the highly competitive and closely fought Bridge and Crib Tournaments" (the Cribbage Champs were identified as Stoker PO [Petty Officer] Tofin and Leading Stoker Mossey; the Bridge Champs were PO Cook Murray and PO Writer Harvey). Lieutenant Bill Lore, the Chinese-Canadian naval reservist, penned a series on the history and culture of China, and an instructional article by the navigator on crossing the International Dateline was sub-titled "Or how to get around having to buy a present": he reported that, although *Crescent's* induction into the Green Dragon Society officially occurred "At 1654 ship's time on Saturday the 12th February 1949, ... the advance of one day is being postponed" to avoid missing a Sunday (with its expected relaxed work routine); instead there would be no Monday, "and tomorrow will be Tuesday the 15th February". The punchline was that the skipped day "Monday the 14th of February would have been the Captain's Wedding Anniversary." This gentle jab, and continued exhortations from the editor for more contributions, encouraged a string of good-natured mess deck ribbing,

¹⁷ The Crescent Globe Trotter, *op. cit.*

escalating from “needling” of the medical officer over the endless rounds of inoculations, through a report of “phoney asdic pings” which the electricians attributed to “one of the Stokers [having] a ham set and is using the [sonar] dome for an aerial.” Gradually, their enthusiasm was tempered by a combination of tropical heat, the boredom of single-ship sailing, and the enormity of what lay before them. Shortwave news reports (transcribed for the paper by the ship’s radio-telegraphists) were punctuated by the increasingly dismal predictions for the peace talks between the Nationalists and Communists. The final edition ended with “a few pointers” from Lieutenant Lore on going ashore in China, including the warning, “it’s also not uncommon for a person just to vanish into thin air in Shanghai....”

Reviewing their progress fifty years on, a professional sailor is struck by the surprising lack of shipboard activity: of the 22 days on passage, seven were taken up with the fuelling stops, but another seven (and not all falling on weekends) were lost to “pipe downs” with work ceasing at noon. The first couple of these can be put down to unexpectedly rough weather on the passage to Hawaii; as well, there was the need for new personnel to get settled in, and probably some days were later lost to extreme afternoon heat in the tropics. But even for the remaining full days, the most significant activity recorded in the ship’s log often was the early forenoon cleaning stations and the continuation of “departmental work”. Only on 22 and 23 February, after leaving Guam and on the final leg before arriving in Shanghai on the 26th, were the guns’ crews exercised, and then only in basic functioning trials, with no rounds fired at any sort of

target.¹⁸ Naval landing parties were not mustered or exercised; plans were not made for alternate accommodation of evacuees. Among the items reported to his superiors back in Canada of “a survey of the activities and facilities available to the Ship’s Company” while at sea, the captain did list “.22 Rifle Range” - right between “Bingo” and “Bathing Tank.”¹⁹ Otherwise, there is no recorded preparation for any of the possible contingencies expected in the mission. The explanation of the ship’s Gunnery Officer, Sub-Lieutenant Peter Birch-Jones, that “We didn’t do any shoots because we were on such a tight schedule that even a delay of a few hours was not acceptable”, is only a partial accounting.²⁰ In fact, this was a situation not unique to *Crescent*, for similar lack of activity is apparent from a review of the logs and Reports of Proceedings from any Canadian ship in this period, when any major shipboard exercise or drill - often regarded as routine today - was of such interest that it rated a special mention in either of those documents. Then-Leading Seaman Jim Tyre had just been drafted to *Crescent* with a number of his mates from *Cayuga* (which had gone into refit for an updating of the A/S equipment), and he remembers that even in that *Tribal*-class destroyer there were only sufficient trained gunnery rates to man one of its four mountings at a time.²¹ Again, it is a reflection of the low general state of readiness of the postwar Canadian fleet, in which

¹⁸ *Crescent*, “Report of Proceedings [for February 1949],” 10 March 1949; and *Crescent*, Ship’s Log, February 1949.

¹⁹ *Crescent*, “Report of Proceedings,” 10 March 1949.

²⁰ Interview, Cdr (ret’d) Peter Birch-Jones, Victoria, BC, 22 June 1998.

²¹ Interview, CPO (ret’d) Jim Tyre, Victoria, BC, 21 June 1998.

frequent drafting of half-trained personnel was so common that captains were often satisfied just in getting their ship to sea.

On arriving in Shanghai, *Crescent* found berthing space at a premium. She had to secure in the stream of the Whangpoo River (a tributary of the Yangtze on which Shanghai is situated) between two buoys and alongside the Australian frigate HMAS *Shoalhaven*



Figure 11: View of the Shanghai Bund from *Crescent*, approaching to come alongside HMAS *Shoalhaven* (K535), with USS *Springfield* in the centre background (CFPU, PMR 98-135).

(see **Figure 11**). Also present were the American cruiser USS *Springfield* and amphibian USS *Bayfield*, the French Navy sloop *Le Dumont d'Orville*, and several British destroyers and frigates. Another Australian frigate, *Warramunga*, was then on station at Nanking, and in two days time the cruiser HMS *London* arrived, wearing the flag of Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Madden, Flag Officer Commanding 5th Cruiser Squadron and Flag Officer Second-in-Command, Far East Station (FES 2i/c). His appearance presaged difficulties over ceremonial, but not exactly in the manner anticipated by Pearson and Claxton. Madden had no intention of usurping Groos's authority, but as the Canadian representative in the port, the latter's ship could not avoid her diplomatic responsibilities

and the attendant necessities of maintaining appearances. *Crescent's* captain - and by extension, the entire ship - was subjected to a never-ending round of official calls and entertainment, with the constant piping of passing boats, a seemingly never-ending requirement for cleaning stations, and frequent adjustment of the ship's routine to keep

pace with the hectic schedule (see **Figure 12**).²² At best this all was bewildering to the

half of the ship's company who had joined the Navy since the end of the war and had never been on an extended cruise to a foreign port in company with major warships.

More ominous was the annoyance expressed by many of the older hands,

who had joined during the war when peacetime ceremonial niceties were overlooked in favour of operational demands. Over the past three years they had resented the sometimes arbitrary re-institution of pre-war standards and did not appreciate the

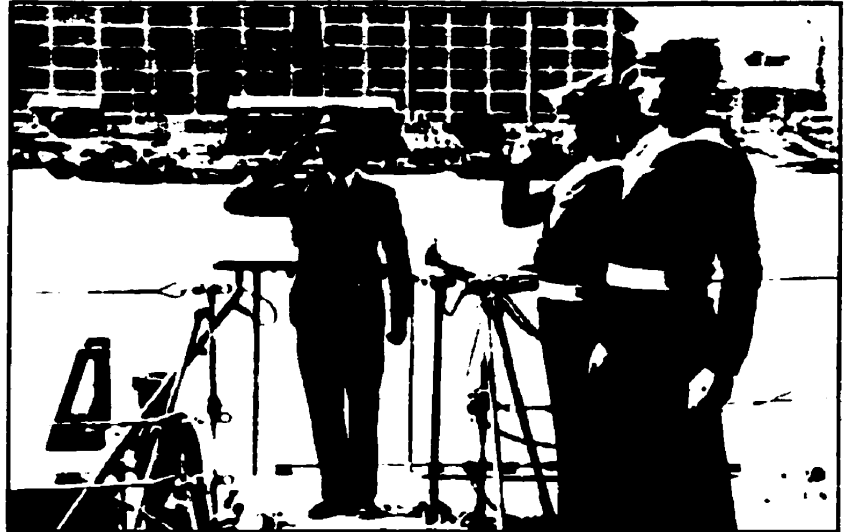


Figure 12: Captain Chow (Chinese Navy) is piped aboard *Crescent* for an official visit in Shanghai, 2 March 1949 (CFPU O-1127-1).

²² *Crescent*, "Reports of Proceedings," 10 March 1949, and 15 April 1949 [for March 1949].

importance of these rituals to the present circumstances. Neither did the officers, often distracted by other pressing concerns, feel the need to provide explanations.²³

None of their lives were made any easier by the attempt of a Canadian destroyer and a training crew to keep apace with a British cruiser and an admiral's retinue. Sub-lieutenant Birch-Jones, whose primary appointment was Gunnery Officer, held the secondary duties of Boats Officer and Entertainment Officer. With the ship moored to a buoy in a Shanghai subject to a dusk-to-dawn curfew, these duties combined to become his full time preoccupation. *Crescent* had the standard Canadian destroyer entitlement of only one motor boat and there were none to charter ashore. Moreover, he found many of his young seamen were inexperienced boat's coxswains and were unable to handle the 3-4 knot tidal current of the Whangpoo River. The whole time, Birch-Jones found:

... I was frantically running temporary repairs to the hull of our motor boat, while trying to keep the over-worked engine going.... George [Withers, the other sub-lieutenant] and I, not long removed from our midshipman's boat running days in Hongkong, finally had to do several trips with each coxswain to teach them boat handling in strong currents."²⁴

At least he had some help ashore when trying to arrange social activities for the crew.

The Canadian expatriate community in Shanghai quickly organized a variety of relaxed entertainment for the men (see **Figure 13**). Still, their "giving luncheons and dinner parties as if there was no tomorrow... caused us some problems":

²³ Tyre interview, 8 October 1997. See also "Testimony *Crescent*", *passim*, for commentary on matters of ceremonial and routine.

²⁴ Peter Birch-Jones, "HMCS CRESCENT - The China Deployment," in HMCS *Crescent* China Trip Reunion Handbook, June 1992, p. 6. A shorter version of this paper appeared as Birch-Jones, "HMCS Crescent... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," in Resolution.

...martial law and a curfew were in force from dusk to dawn. Those who broke the curfew got arrested if they were lucky and shot if they were not. ... The only way we could grant any shore leave after dark was to organize parties in which the transport would be diplomatic vehicles which were exempt from the curfew. Because of Bruce Rankin [the Canadian Trade and Commercial attaché in Shanghai]'s efforts, we were able to organize parties for the ship's company for about 30 men per day. This was a good effort on the part of the Canadians and British but we had a crew of 167 men and to this day the Canadian sailor infinitely prefers to do his own running ashore rather than go to "organised does."²⁵

Under the watchful
telescope of the flagship's
Officer of the Day and
with a strict curfew in
effect, the Canadians
found Shanghai an exotic
yet restrained port of
call.²⁶



Figure 13: Canadian expatriates entertain members of *Crescent's* ship's company ashore in Shanghai (CFPU, PMR 98-147).

Still, *Crescent's*
arrival was having the

effect desired by the foreign policy establishment. The North China Daily reported that her presence along with the other ships in port "constituted a formidable fleet which would satisfy the heart of the most obstinate pessimist."²⁷ Ambassador Davis only

²⁵ Birch-Jones, "HMCS CRESCENT - The China Deployment," p. 9.

²⁶ Lore, "The Crescent Episode of 1949", pp. 10-13; and, "Crescent Reports: Cruise to the Far East," Crowsnest, Vol. 1, No. 9 (July 1949), p. 4.

²⁷ Excerpt, North China Daily (Shanghai), 27 February 1949, in DEA 366-H-40.

received his mailed copy of the operation plan after the ship's actual arrival in China, but in noting its stated object, he reported to Ottawa that:

...it is altogether fitting and proper that Canada should make her contribution to this Joint Commonwealth effort and the *Crescent* is thus more than welcome to take her place in the chain of protective units which have been stationed here....

I... was mighty proud to see her come up the river. The visit has been widely publicized and has definitely enhanced the prestige of Canada out here.²⁸

Caught up in the headiness of having his own warship at his disposal - and on a river resonant with the history of gunboat diplomacy - Davis evidently had quite forgotten his earlier willingness to acquiesce to British protection. Both in Canada and in China, *Crescent* and her mission were developing a direct and potent association with the word *prestige*.

After two weeks in Shanghai, on 10 March *Crescent* proceeded up the Yangtze River for her turn in the rotation at Nanking. Draped over either side of her hull was a large Union Jack. since "The procedure was that the Nationalists, who held the south bank of the Yangtze, and the Communists, who held the north bank, had both agreed to allow British warships to transit the river by day...."²⁹ Canadian prestige notwithstanding, the small maple leaf affixed to each side of the funnel probably would not have been recognizable to oriental eyes, and the Red Ensign, besides being difficult to paint, was more likely to be confused with the Communist standard. The 200 mile passage (see map 2) could not be accomplished in one day, and *Crescent* anchored overnight under the

²⁸ *Ibid.* Nanking to Ottawa, No. 48, 5 March 1949.

²⁹ Birch-Jones. "HMCS *Crescent*... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," p. 14.

protective guns of the Nationalist fortress at Kiangyin, where arrangements had been made with the Communists to allow foreign warships to stop overnight. Standing to their action stations, the gravity of the situation was suddenly brought home to the crew. All about them were the signs of war:

On the left bank, in particular, we saw many pill-boxes, trenches and earthen defences thrown up in anticipation of the attacks which were to come.... After the initially wide mouth of the river was astern of us, it narrowed down to about a half a mile in width. The navigable channel, however, was rarely more than 200 yards wide and wandered from left bank to right bank and back again. (The predicament of [ships coming under attack] ... will be apparent when you realize that navigating in the river is like proceeding along a railway track at 20 miles an hour, a sitting target committed to the navigable channel).³⁰

The passage was uneventful, and the Canadian destroyer arrived in Nanking late on 11 March, berthing outboard of HMS *Cossack* to begin the turnover of guard ship duties. It is difficult to quantify the boost to morale which the presence of a single warship provided the anxious members of the diplomatic community while they awaited the inevitable Communist assault across the river. The twenty-seven embassies were clustered roughly in one area and their staffs already had been reduced to essential male personnel, so if an evacuation was necessary the embarkation was to be effected by firing the prescribed creeping barrage over their heads. To the Canadians, "it all sounded a bit hairy, but that was the British plan and we were stuck with it."³¹ More importantly, the warships provided the one secure communications link with the outside world. This inevitably made them the centre of attention, and their major responsibility, as noted by

³⁰ Crowsnest, "Cruise to the Far East", pp. 4-5.

³¹ Birch-Jones, "HMCS Crescent... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," p. 14.

Groos in his monthly report of proceedings, was all the more exhausting: "Official and unofficial entertainment which it [was] impossible to avoid even for short periods commenced at once and continued as in Shanghai without a break for the entire period of our stay."³²

The turnover complete, *Cossack* departed on 14 March, and *Crescent* began her ten day tour as Senior Commonwealth Naval Officer (Afloat). For all the renewed demands of official entertainment on the captain and his officers, Nanking was hardly an inviting shore leave for the ship's company. Bill Lore describes it as "a city facing its doom.... Business was almost at a standstill, food was scarce and places of entertainment few and far between."³³ A "wet" canteen where the men could get off the ship for a bottle of beer was set up in a warehouse on the jetty, but that simple pleasure was made hazardous as a monsoonal rain brought on a rapid rise in the river level and washed away the gangplank. Earlier in the day, a large shipment of quart bottles of beer had been off-loaded for pickup by the British embassy. The truck had failed to arrive by nightfall, so in the midst of all this other commotion the short-handed duty watch, rather than standing extra sentry duty, were called out to bring the beer back on board. For *Crescent's* crew, their nerves already on edge from the upriver passage, it was too much. During his late evening rounds as duty officer, Sub-lieutenant Birch-Jones noticed that "the men were sitting on benches and talking in subdued tones. I remember thinking how unusually

³² *Crescent*, "Report of Proceedings," 15 April 1949.

³³ Lore. "Crescent Episode," p. 12.

quiet the ship had become.”³⁴ After colours the next morning, 15 March, when it came time to start the work day, 83 men ranked Leading Seaman or below - over half the ship's lower deck complement - refused to acknowledge the repeated call “*Out pipes,*” and instead locked themselves in the forward messdeck.

The incident could not have come at a worse moment. It was not known if the men were armed, but if they chose to resist at all, *Crescent's* officers and senior ratings could not hope to re-impose order with no outside assistance available. They were the western military presence in Nanking, so they were left to act entirely with their own resources. And, as the local commander of the Chinese Navy was expected to call on the ship at 10:00, they had to act quickly.

Lieutenant-Commander Groos was no stranger to mutiny - as captain of the destroyer *Restigouche*, in January 1944 he had put down a smaller but equally dangerous outbreak at sea in the North Atlantic, when a group of seamen newly drafted on board felt they had been unfairly accused of theft by the ship's doctor and had threatened to cease work until given an apology. Groos's steadiness and quick thinking then had earned him the commendation of the British commodore responsible for Canadian ships operating out of Londonderry, who noted that he had “dealt with this matter promptly, firmly and correctly, showing good powers of leadership and knowledge of his men.”³⁵ Mustering

³⁴ Birch-Jones, “HMCS *Crescent*... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking,” p. 15.

³⁵ NAC, Personnel Records Centre (PRC), D.W. Groos, Personal File, S206 [efficiency evaluation], 3 October 1944 [signed, Cmdre G.W.G “Shrimp” Simpson]; and, Audette Papers, vol 12-15, “Correspondence, Personal & Private, Naval Inquiry, General,” Rear-Admiral Simpson to Audette, 21 June 1950.

these same qualities once again upon being informed of the present situation, Groos calmly called for one of the Able Seamen “who was known to be a good hand, well liked by the men, and was among those shut in.”³⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, the man responded, bringing with him a list of demands calling for:

- (1) First Lieutenant to relieve the existing Executive Officer [who as chief administrator in the ship had overall responsibility for routines and work assignments];
- (2) A Welfare Committee [for the airing of petty grievances] that will not be vetoed by the Captain;
- (3) A definite [Canadian] routine that will not be changed every few days...;
- (4) [More sentries for the duty watch];
- (5) A little consideration from the Captain.... Your first consideration is the ship’s company, not your social functions ashore.³⁷

Groos accompanied the sailor back to his mates shortly after 09:30 and was allowed in:

The mess deck was crowded, but the men were quiet and cleared a space for me. I told them that this was a sad day for the RCN, not only that we had a mutiny but that it had taken place while we were representing Canada abroad and directly under the eyes of a great number of Foreign Ambassadors.

I then went on to say that I had no idea until that time that the men had any grievances or complaints but that at any rate this was not the method of bringing them to my notice.³⁸

Groos was the only one to speak. Not asking for any explanations, he described only consequences. Naval discipline could not allow for the unrestricted airing of mass grievances, but regulations did permit a captain to hear individual complaints. He told his

³⁶ The Mainguy Report, p. 16.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17; and, Birch-Jones, “HMCS Crescent... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking,” p. 16.

³⁸ “Testimony *Crescent*”, p. 1399.

sailors that he was going to have “*Hands fall in*” piped at 09:50 and that “requestmen” would be seen at 10:45, after the Chinese admiral had departed. The Mainguy Report summarizes the conclusion of the incident:

At 0950, all hands responded to the pipe and from then on normal routine was carried out. The Captain saw nineteen men later that day.... The other men who had put in requests, withdrew them the next day. No disciplinary action was taken.³⁹

There had never been any hint of violence or refusal to respond to an emergency situation ashore, and knowledge of the incident was kept restricted to the ship. Still, Groos’s inclination to treat it with the severity deserving of mutiny was stayed, among other reasons, by his complete isolation from supporting military forces and the overriding desire “to get the men back to work immediately to prevent loss of prestige in this city with its thirty-five ambassadors.”⁴⁰ In this he was successful, for Ambassador Davis only learned of the matter three days later when Groos informed him that Naval Service Headquarters was preparing to make a press release about the incident. Davis was taken aback and strongly recommended against any public acknowledgement of the affair, as it was sure to be misconstrued in the context of the local civil war as having “political significance... and [again] may be highly injurious to Canada’s prestige.”⁴¹

However, this time, the lid could not be kept closed. News already had broken in Canada that the destroyer *Athabaskan* had experienced a similar incident on 26 February

³⁹ The Mainguy Report, p. 17.

⁴⁰ Audette Papers, *Crescent* to NSHQ, 171751Z/March/1949.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, *Crescent* to NSHQ, 180930Z/March/1949.

at Manzanillo, Mexico (*Crescent*'s crew had known nothing of that), and within a few days of the despatch of Groos's signal of 18 March, the aircraft carrier *Magnificent* would also report troubles. *Crescent*'s was not an isolated incident, as Groos had surmised, occasioned by the unique circumstances of their mission in China. If in Nanking there were no local consequences of the incident, in Canada the apparently widespread breakdown in fleet discipline was construed as having political significance. Claxton ordered a general commission of inquiry to get to the root of the "incidents" and "other matters concerning the Royal Canadian Navy."⁴²

The British Commander-in-Chief of the Far East Station, Admiral Sir Patrick Brind, was also aware that something was not quite right. It is not clear how he learned of the incident in Nanking, although it appears that Groos may have requested HMS *London*'s Royal Marines to stand by in the event of further trouble.⁴³ On completion of the Canadian destroyer's tour at Nanking, Brind signalled to NSHQ that - note the tense - "I have been glad to have HMCS CRESCENT on the Station." He continued by noting that "The evacuation for which she came does not yet seem imminent and the situation may persist for some months", and that conditions in neither Shanghai nor Nanking were suitable for a long stay. While awaiting news from NSHQ as to how long *Crescent* was likely to remain in the Far East, he intended to bring her down to Hong Kong, "where she can meet and exercise with Ships of the Fleet to their mutual benefit" - and, by

⁴² The Mainguy Report, p. 1.

⁴³ "Testimony *Crescent*", p. 1402.

implication, remain under the close gaze of more Royal Marines, under more controlled circumstances.⁴⁴

For *Crescent*, at least, the incident of 15 March proved cathartic. There was no slackening in the pace of Groos's diplomatic obligations and the Executive Officer was not dismissed, but the Welfare Committee was re-invigorated, and more attention was paid to minimizing disruptions to routine. At the Canadian Embassy, Jack Maybee undertook as rigorous an all-ranks entertainment programme as the local conditions permitted. All this worked

to ensure there were no further troubles and Groos noted an almost immediate improvement in morale.⁴⁵

When HMS *Consort* arrived as scheduled on 23 March to relieve the

Canadians, *Crescent* set off on her passage down river



Figure 14: Staff of the Canadian Embassy on board HMS *Consort* (standing above the Union Jack) to see *Crescent* off from Nanking, 23 March 1949 (CFPU PMR 98-148).

⁴⁴ PRO, FO 371/F2862/1611/10, message CinC FES Afloat to CANAVHED, 190901Z/March/1949. In an interview in Ottawa, 25 October 1995, a former Royal Marine recalled hearing of the affair. He was not himself present in Hong Kong at the time, but remembers fellow officers speaking of “keeping an eye” on *Crescent* while she was there.

⁴⁵ *Crescent*, “Report of Proceedings,” 15 April 1949; “Testimony *Crescent*”, *passim*; and, Jack Maybee, “Extracts from letters home, 1949,” 11-23 March 1949 [provided at interview].

(see **Figure 14**), pausing again under the guns at Kiangyin, this time darkening ship “for ringside seats... to enjoy the spectacle of sporadic starshell, flares and gunfire from the opposing factions some five miles away.”⁴⁶ The next day, not stopping in Shanghai, she rendezvoused at the mouth of the Yangtze with HMS *Cossack* to proceed in company for Hong Kong, where they arrived on 27 March.

The old colonial port certainly promised greater opportunities for rest and relaxation than had been possible on the mainland, but even there the strains of the civil war were making themselves felt. *Crescent* was temporarily attached to the 8th Destroyer Flotilla, and before any leave could be piped, the Canadian destroyer engaged to participate in Operation ‘Lancer’, a combined services effort involving Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and British Army units, designed to test the defences of Hong Kong and the New Territories against a land assault from the north.⁴⁷ Naval and air units had not been present in December 1941 when the Hong Kong garrison, including two Canadian battalions, had faced just such a real-life scenario, but in 1949 the outcome for “a theatre which [did] not take either first or second priority in [Britain’s] world strategy” was just as predictable.⁴⁸ *Crescent* reported gaining valuable experience “in shore bombardment procedures and communication arrangements with shore parties”, but no one in Ottawa

⁴⁶ *Crescent*, “Report of Proceedings,” 15 April 1949.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Murfett, *In Jeopardy*, p. 94. On the disastrous Canadian involvement in the first defence of Hong Kong, see Brereton Greenhous, “C” Force to Hong Kong: A Canadian Catastrophe, 1941-1945 [Canadian War Museum Historical Publication No. 30] (Toronto: Dundurn, 1997), *passim*.

seems to have taken exception to the potential of her further involvement. Concluding with a full day of exercises with the RN flotilla - the first multi-ship manoeuvres in the postwar experience of most of those in *Crescent* - the Canadians re-entered Hong Kong harbour on 1 April to begin their expected shore leave.

The Canadian destroyer finally settled into a relaxed routine. Major items of maintenance were undertaken, such as repairs to boiler brickwork, and on 8 April a party of thirteen officers and 127 men were landed for a ceremonial laying of wreaths on the graves of the Canadian soldiers at Sai Wan and Stanley Cemeteries. With all other British ships either in various stages of refit or on station to the north in Shanghai and Nanking, commencing on 7 April, *Crescent* was listed as the "duty destroyer", a responsibility held through the end of the month. An active sports program, relatively unrestricted shore leave, and the "opportunity to participate in exercises and practices", led Groos to conclude that "The visit to Hong Kong is having a most salutary effect... noticeable in the increased confidence and pride the Men have in their weapons and their ship"⁴⁹ (see **Figure 15**).



Figure 15: *Crescent's* "Comic Football Team" before going ashore at Hong Kong to play against HMS *Constance*, 12 April 1949 (CFPU CR-49-29).

⁴⁹ *Crescent*. "Reports of Proceedings," 15 April 1949, and 22 May 1949 [for April 1949].

Meanwhile, the subject of her return to Canada had been raised. The first to do so was Groos, in his initial report to NSHQ of the incident of 15 March, urging that *Crescent*'s departure be "not unduly delayed."⁵⁰ He changed this recommendation as shipboard relations improved, but by then NSHQ was anxious for the destroyer's return to participate in the commission of inquiry. Pearson reminded Claxton, however, "that the stated reason for the despatch of the ship was... to assist in the evacuation of Canadian citizens" and he hoped *Crescent* would be able to remain in the Far East for the three months originally considered. He echoed the Ambassador's alternative that "If we are to carry our share in [the] Commonwealth evacuation scheme, plans should be laid to relieve *Crescent* at [the] proper time until [the] situation clarifies."⁵¹

Davis, however, was losing his enthusiasm for having a ship at his disposal. The ambassador and his staff admitted in retrospect that "we knew nothing of naval matters and felt it pointless to put us in charge, particularly as our communication links with the *Crescent* were bound to be tenuous in a crisis situation."⁵² Reviewing the "Visit of HMCS *Crescent*", he took the position that "She was a very welcome visitor.... Both men and officers created a most favourable impression." However, in comparing them to British sailors, he noted their general "softness... their being homesick and wanting to get back to Canada just as fast as they could," a condition he put down to a combination of

⁵⁰ Audette Papers, *Crescent* to CANAVHED, [n.d. - 15 March 1949].

⁵¹ DEA 366-H-40, Pearson to Claxton, 24 March 1949, quoting Nanking to Ottawa No. 72, 23 March 1949.

⁵² Beecroft, "Walking the Tightrope," p. 52, quoting interviews with F.G. Ballachey (Vice-Consul in Shanghai) and Jack Maybee.

“our standard of life and our way of life [which] creates a softness... not evident in their counterparts in the British Navy,” and to the lack of discipline in the young occasioned by the recent war, with fathers having been absent “at a very important and formative stage of the youths’ development.”⁵³ These were important considerations in his next despatch, sent 4 April, which noted the general feeling in Nanking that the Communists would attempt to cross the Yangtze by the end of May. His best information from the British naval attaché was that the planned rotation of ships up to mid-June did not include *Crescent*, and that “If and when crossings are started..., no further destroyer will be sent here and [the] destroyer here will remain until it can be withdrawn without being involved in action.” Returning to his belief that there were sufficient British ships to evacuate all Commonwealth citizens to Hong Kong, and if the Canadian destroyer was urgently required for the RCN’s summer training programme, he could see “no reason, apart from prestige or your desire to [meet] the wishes of [the] Admiralty, why *Crescent* should not. repeat not, return to Canada now, repeat now.”⁵⁴

This assessment arrived in Ottawa at a critical moment in the postwar evolution of the Department of External Affairs. On 15 March, Escott Reid had been replaced as acting under-secretary by the permanent appointment of A.D.P. Heeney, brought in from the Cabinet Secretariat. While Heeney was still settling in, Pearson and Reid had gone to

⁵³ DEA 366-H-40, Nanking to Ottawa, [letter] No. 76, 1 April 1949. His feeling was that “I am afraid that there is going to have to be a tremendous change in the mental attitude in young Canadians before you will ever get them to accept conditions necessitating their remaining that long away from home during times of peace....”

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Nanking to Ottawa, [message] No. 75, 4 April 1949; also Nanking to Ottawa, [message] No. 76, 5 April 1949.

London with a large coterie for the formal signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April. With Claxton acting as Secretary of State, and Menzies of course still familiar with the China file, the DEA-DND lines of communication should in fact have been tightened.

However, such was not the case. Perhaps it was due to Claxton's hesitation to intrude too heavily in a file on which

Pearson had taken a personal interest, or the fact that Menzies now was acting as Head of the entire American and Far Eastern Division.

Maybe they were all just busy with other matters. It was not until 11 April that a cable finally was



Figure 16: The Flag Officer 2nd-in-Command of the Far East Station, Vice-Admiral A.C.G. Madden, on an informal inspection on board *Crescent* at Hong Kong, speaks with the Coxswain, CPO1 Robert Marshall. Behind Madden are LCdr Groos and Lieutenant Wood (CFPU, PMR 98-142).

despatched to Nanking, with the decision that *Crescent* should remain in Chinese waters until at least mid-May. Admiral Brind would be requested to have the Canadian destroyer's next tour up the Yangtze moved forward to the end of April.⁵⁵ Nothing, however, appears to have been forwarded to Groos. Having at first received conflicting

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Heeney to A/SSEA, 6 April 1949, with attachments; Menzies to Heeney, 6 April 1949; Menzies to A/SSEA, 7 April 1949; and, Ottawa to Nanking, No. 71, 11 April 1949.

signals as to her future, for the first three weeks of April. *Crescent* heard nothing (see **Figure 16**).

The ship's future was still in limbo when the Communists began their crossing of the Yangtze on 20 April. The extent of British knowledge as to when the crossing would take place is still open to debate. However, contrary to the rotation intention reported by Ambassador Davis, the replacement of HMS *Consort* at Nanking by the British frigate *Amethyst* was underway at that precise moment. On her passage upriver, halfway between Kiangyin and Nanking (see Map 2), *Amethyst* came under fire from Communist forces on the north bank, who, whether they recognized her as a foreign warship or not, believed she was interfering with their assault. The wheelhouse and bridge were hit by the opening rounds. A number of casualties were suffered, including the captain, and *Amethyst* soon was hard aground. On learning of the incident, *Consort* immediately departed Nanking to lend support and attempt to take *Amethyst* under tow. She too came under such sustained fire that she had to abandon the rescue and continue down river to Shanghai. Not only did the British have a major military problem and diplomatic incident on their hands, but the Western diplomatic community in Nanking was without benefit of a guard ship at the very moment of its envisioned utility.⁵⁶

Using the latitude allowed for in the Canadian operation plan, Groos exercised his discretion in the way any naval officer trained for action would. In view of the fact that *Crescent* now was one of only two working destroyers on the China Station (HM Ships *Cossack* and *Comus* were refitting), he cancelled a forthcoming port call to Manila, and

⁵⁶ Murfett, *Hostage on the Yangtze*, Chapter 3, "Under Attack", *passim*.

placed his ship at the disposal of Admiral Brind. Following their three weeks of exercises, sports competitions and general interaction with the Royal Navy in Hong Kong, "the Ship's Company were obviously pleased when I informed them that I had done this. They now feel quite a bond of fellowship between themselves and the other ships in this flotilla and it is very evident in many ways."⁵⁷ For the moment, the Canadians were kept employed as duty destroyer in Hong Kong, but a failed relief attempt by the Royal Navy ships *London* and *Black Swan* the morning of 21 April brought fresh urgency to *Crescent's* ambiguous position. Anticipating Brind might mount a second attempt with all available force, Groos radioed NSHQ his concern that "Since my arrival in this theatre my status has been somewhat obscure."⁵⁸ Although he presumed the British admiral would not order him to take part in the "present affair" without instructions from Ottawa, he requested that his position be clarified.

Pearson still was in London, where what was becoming known as "The *Amethyst* Incident" was developing into a full-blown crisis for Britain's Labour government. Groos's message, forwarded to him by Claxton, prompted an immediate reaction. Noting that he had discussed the matter with Admiral Grant, also in London (for the first major NATO staff exercise, 'Trident'), Pearson ordered that "it is important that this ship should not become involved in any incidents if that can be avoided, and for that purpose it should not be ordered to the Yangtze." He hastened to explain that "This is not a question of us evading any responsibility but merely exercising ordinary caution by not

⁵⁷ *Crescent*, "Report of Proceedings [for April 1949]," 22 May 1949.

⁵⁸ DEA 366-H-40, *Crescent* to NSHQ, 211952Z/April/1949.

participating in what appear to be useless gestures....” At the same time, he thought it important “that the ship should not return to Canada in the present circumstances but should remain at [Hong Kong] during the current emergency.” To do otherwise, he felt, “would create a bad impression.”⁵⁹

He need not have worried, as Admiral Brind clearly understood the limits of the command relationship described in Operation Plan CANAVHED 1-49, and had anticipated the official Canadian position. Not imagining the speed with which Pearson’s response would be relayed to Hong Kong, in the meanwhile Groos had gone ashore to see the British commander, this time accompanied by Lore. They proposed that the Chinese-Canadian naval officer be flown to *Amethyst* in a Sunderland flying boat to attempt to mediate the affair:

...the Admiral appeared to listen closely to what I had said and nodded his head but after considering for a few moments he regretfully told us that... he would still require permission from NSHQ through firstly the British Embassy in Nanking, the Canadian Embassy in Nanking, then the External Affairs Department before his request reaches NSHQ and even then NSHQ would have to obtain consent from the Canadian Parliament before any approval could go back to him in Hong Kong. He concluded by saying that by that time *Amethyst* and all those surviving on her would be beyond help! ... [H]e had no power to send even one Canadian into danger.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Canadian High-Commissioner (London) to Ottawa, No. 835, 22 April 1949.

⁶⁰ Lore. “The CRESCENT Episode,” pp. 19-20. Perhaps contributing to Brind’s decision was his previous experience with Canadian politics and the RCN: in 1945, he had been commander of the cruiser squadron of the British Pacific Fleet to which HMCS *Uganda* (commanded by then-Captain Rollo Mainguy) was attached when that ship, acting on the Liberal government’s instructions that all personnel serving in the Pacific theatre had to volunteer to do so, effectively voted herself out of the war. See Bill Rawling, “Paved with Good Intentions: HMCS *Uganda*, the Pacific war, and the Volunteer Issue,” Canadian Military History, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Autumn 1995), pp. 23-33.

With clarification of his status confirmed almost immediately by Pearson's instructions, Groos kept his ship and all of her officers in Hong Kong. Nor did Brind attempt any further "useless gestures." Still, *Crescent* could not remain isolated from the events on the mainland. Over the next several days, her function as duty destroyer saw her sail to escort the damaged *Consort* into harbour through thick fog, and to assist in the working-up of the newly arrived British cruiser *Belfast*, again participating in a series of exercises bombarding shore positions in confined waters.⁶¹

Even though DEA was unaware of these activities, Heeney was becoming anxious over the precise nature of *Crescent*'s continued presence in Chinese waters. Nanking was not defended and fell without major disturbance on 24 April. At Shanghai the situation was still precarious (it would not be "liberated" until 26 May), but on reviewing the "welfare of Canadians" in that city, Menzies noted that Canadian Pacific Airlines conveniently was conducting a survey of Far Eastern air routes using two North Stars on loan from the RCAF, and had offered to keep them in Hong Kong for use in an evacuation. *Crescent*, he felt, could do little more than "hope the Ambassador can maintain wireless communication with [Admiral Brind] with regard to [her] use."⁶² With all land lines cut, and without a naval vessel on station, however, Nanking was isolated. Heeney was "concerned lest the *Crescent* should become involved in action against the Chinese Communists" and, through NSHQ, had a signal sent to Admiral Brind reiterating the "desire" that *Crescent* "be employed only on [the] specific request of [the] Canadian

⁶¹ *Crescent*, "Report of Proceedings," 22 May 1949.

⁶² DCER, 1949, pp. 1761-1763, DEA 500055-40, Menzies to Heeney, 25 April 1949.

Ambassador.” adding that the ship should return to Canada as soon as convenient.⁶³

Attempting to coordinate with the effectively *incommunicado* Canadian Ambassador was the least of Brind’s concerns. He peremptorily responded that *Crescent* could leave immediately, and the ship was ordered to sail from Hong Kong on 3 May.⁶⁴ Apparently this was a little too hasty a departure for Ottawa’s liking, and Heeney requested NSHQ send a further signal, that “it is desired that [*Crescent*] remain in Chinese waters until [the] situation in Shanghai becomes clear, and in view of the fact that she has been standing by to assist in a possible evacuation, an emergency which cannot yet be considered unnecessary or impossible.”⁶⁵ There is no record of a response from the British admiral, but *Crescent*’s itinerary had included a refuelling stop from a Royal Navy oiler at the mouth of the Yangtze, so Groos opted to sail as ordered, and remain in that vicinity until his status once more was clarified.

Claxton does not appear to have become overly involved to this point in *Crescent*’s mission to China, even given his position as Minister responsible for the Navy and occasionally having acted as Secretary of State for External Affairs in Pearson’s absence from the country. Now, however, he too felt the dithering had to be ended. On 5 May, he wrote directly to Prime Minister St Laurent, echoing Brind’s assessment that “it now seems unlikely that [the] Shanghai situation will become clear for some considerable

⁶³ DEA 366-H-40, Heeney to A/SSEA, 27 April 1949 [also cited in DCER, 1949, pp.1764-1766]; and, CANAVHED to CINC FES, 282046Z/April/1949.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, FO 2 I/C FES to CANAVHED, 291109Z/April/1949.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, CANAVHED to CINC FES, 032115Z/May/1949.

time", and as such *Crescent's* retention in the area was of doubtful utility. The record of discussion on this matter at Cabinet on 3 May infers a difference of opinion between Pearson and Claxton, which the Secretary of State apparently won with the decision that "plans for the return of *Crescent* be held in abeyance...." But the defence minister wanted to get on with the Mainguy Inquiry, and the members of *Crescent's* ship's company were needed to give evidence. Indeed, given the recent troubles in the ship, Claxton advised St Laurent he was concerned that the constant changing of departure date made any further delay in the ship's return inadvisable "when it was obvious that no useful purpose would be served."⁶⁶

In the meanwhile, fortunately, Ambassador Davis finally was able to get a message through to Ottawa. It arrived just in time to be used as the basis of a face-saving press statement on 7 May, prepared at External but attributed to Claxton, that *Crescent* would sail from Chinese waters for Esquimalt on the 9th. The Canadian Ambassador to China had reported:

...that all Canadians desiring to leave in advance of the Communist occupation... have had ample opportunity to leave by commercial transportation facilities. Alternative emergency evacuation arrangements have been completed to take care of Canadian and other Commonwealth nationals who have decided to remain in Shanghai.⁶⁷

The only further delay in the ship's departure was occasioned by the time required for *Crescent's* supply officer to pass to the Canadian consulate in Shanghai all of his spare

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*. Claxton to St Laurent, 5 May 1949 (copy); and, Cabinet Conclusions, "China; current situation," 3 May 1949.

⁶⁷ DEA 366-H-40, Press Release (draft), 7 May 1949.

American funds, some \$65,000. That completed, on 9 May *Crescent* shaped course for Canada, reversing her route of four months previous. Along the way, in preparation for their return home, the ship's company took advantage of the fuelling stop in Pearl Harbor to give their ship a fresh coat of paint. To better commemorate their time in the Far East, Groos agreed to the gunners' request that *Crescent's* gun barrels be painted black in the fashion of the 8th Destroyer Flotilla.⁶⁸

Crescent arrived back in Esquimalt on Saturday, 4 June.⁶⁹ For the sailors' arrival, the jetty was thronged with their loved ones. The *Victoria Daily Times* and the *Colonist* treated them as heroes, each devoting nearly a full page to recounting their adventures. Festooned with souvenirs "[ranging] from tiny bamboo models of junks to large, carved wooden chests... and, of course, samples of inflated Chinese currency," the papers observed that "the sailors were millionaires - in terms of Chinese money." The latent danger in their mission was underscored by a story noting the fates of the British ships with which the Canadians had served on the Yangtze: *Consort* (which had relieved *Crescent* at Nanking) on returning down river had been "shot up by Communist guns" and *Amethyst* - which had been "steaming up the Yangtze to relieve the *Consort* when the Communists fired on her" - was still being held hostage. As for the original intent of the cruise, the papers reported the "one 'refugee' on the *Crescent*... was Lucy Lockett, a black

⁶⁸ "Testimony *Crescent* [Groos]." pp. 1998-2000; and interviews Birch-Jones and Tyre.

⁶⁹ *Crescent*, "Report of Proceedings [for May 1949]." 2 June 1949, and 13 August 1949 [for June 1949].

and white spotted Dalmatian, the property of the Canadian trade commissioner at Hong Kong.⁷⁰

So ended the Canadian destroyer's mission to China. For all of the interest - with occasional lapses - in the cruise as it unfolded, the Department of External Affairs undertook no assessment of its overall effectiveness; neither was the Navy yet in the habit of requiring comprehensive post-deployment reports to supplement the regular monthly returns. The only formal critique of the mission was provided by the Royal Navy captain of the 8th Destroyer Flotilla with which *Crescent* had worked. It is surprising for its insight:

On arrival on the Far East Station it was realised that her ship's company who were practically all borne for training only were most inexperienced, and the same was apparent of most of the officers... thus naturally to start with she was backward in most things.

By the time she left the station the whole picture had changed, she was smart, ready for action, competent at sea manoeuvres, and had a cheerful balanced ship's company. ... The ship was as much liked ashore as it was by the rest of my flotilla and it was with regret that we saw her depart.⁷¹

Having finally made its way some months later to Canada, this letter was filed away without comment to Groos's personal file, with a copy appended to a little-used headquarters file of work-ups reports. Given the restrictive practices of that time, it is doubtful if Groos was even advised of its existence.

⁷⁰ The *Victoria Daily Times*, 4 June 1949, and the *Victoria Colonist*, 5 June 1949 [clippings in unpublished HMCS *Crescent* China Trip Reunion Handbook, June 1992].

⁷¹ Groos Personal File, Captain (D) 8th Destroyer Flotilla, 10 May 1949; and, RG 24, vol 11.535, [CO(FO)AC - General] AC 8000-358/36, HMCS *Crescent*, General Information."

A large part of the naval establishment wished the whole sorry business had just never happened. But was the Commission of Inquiry any better prepared to hear the men's grievances? The handling of *Crescent's* return was not encouraging. After having been away for over five months, the ship's company were allowed only one day with their loved ones before having to get down to business. The quarter of the crew who formed the Sunday duty watch did not get even that. The men were assembled on Monday morning, 6 June 1949, for their presentation of testimony. Admiral Mainguy addressed them to describe the simple procedure: "We want to give those who wish to come forward the opportunity to give evidence.... We do not intend to lay either blame or charges: we want only to find out what is wrong with the RCN."⁷²

Who were these men? What had driven them to mass insubordination? The questions seemed clear enough, but most of the sailors remained hesitant to come forward, and twenty-five names of witnesses had to be drawn by lot. The general feeling was "That little speech... set us back several months and revived old resentments." To *Crescent's* crew, part of the problem could be found in the very fact of their early recall to Canada before their mission to China was completed. Another part was soon to come. The distaste of the commissioners for "British" affectations and their sentiment that the was RCN was not "Canadian" enough was already clear from the earlier hearing into *Athabaskan's* incident. In April, in response to "a memorandum from the Minister of National Defence regarding reintroducing the wartime practice of wearing a Maple Leaf Emblem on Ships' Funnels," Naval Board had directed the promulgation of a Naval

⁷² Birch-Jones, "HMCS *Crescent*... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," p. 19.

General Order to that effect.⁷³ Now the eyes of the staff of the Flag Officer Pacific Coast could not be drawn away from the sight that *Crescent's* gun barrels, normally an innocuous bare gun-metal grey, had been painted the black of the Royal Navy's 8th Destroyer Flotilla. After Admiral Mainguy's address, the Gunnery Officer "received a curt message: our gun barrels were to be painted grey forthwith. No doubt about it - we were home!"⁷⁴

⁷³ DHH. Minutes of Naval Board Meetings, vol 7, 6 April 1949, minute 284-8.

⁷⁴ Birch-Jones, "HMCS *Crescent*... and the two-hour mutiny in Nanking," p. 19.

Chapter 5: Complement, Culture and Identity

It is the practice among navies which follow the British tradition that individual warships, when not underway, display a plaque of the battle honours earned by them or any forebears of the same name. Thus, HMCS *Crescent*, the thirteenth “Royal” Navy ship so-named, while moored in Shanghai and later alongside in Nanking, proudly displayed - on large burnished steel banderoles set into highly varnished wood - her lineage of English victories over Spanish, Dutch and French fleets, the last of them won when the very idea of “Canada” was a relative novelty, and long before any thought of a distinct Canadian Navy:

ARMADA 1588
GABBARD 1653
SCHEVENINGEN 1653
MARTINIQUE 1762
REUNION 1793
CAPE OF GOOD HOPE 1795.

Cut in the shape of an over-sized Canadian maple leaf, the plaque seems incongruous to the modern viewer. The evidence of a contemporary photograph, however (see **Figure 17**. over), is that, while the battle honours on the board might be British, the admiring faces bespeak pride in the Canadian form in which they found expression.

The paradox extends to other levels. There is no small irony in the fact that *Crescent* technically was still a British ship, her final transfer from the Royal Navy having yet to be negotiated. To any casual observer, *Crescent* was quite



Figure 17: HMCS *Crescent* Battle Honour Board (RCN photo, HS-15371). Original caption, dated 14 August 1951, reads: “Battle honours of fighting *Crescents* are displayed on a plaque aboard the destroyer HMCS *Crescent*, the 13th ship to bear the name. Shown: Lt.Cdr. Ian A. McPhee, Executive Officer [in summer khaki uniform], points out the battles in which the various *Crescents* have participated -- dating from the Spanish Armada – to UNTD Cadet Roger Gilbert, left, of Montreal, and P.O. Jerome J. Hickey of Owen Sound.”

indistinguishable from the British warships present on the Far East station. The Royal Navy’s 8th Destroyer Flotilla comprised her look-alike “C”-class sister-ships *Consort*, *Comus*, *Cossack* and *Constance*. Even the sailors all wore the same uniform, officers with peaked caps and double-breasted navy blue tunics (four rows of buttons for commissioned officers, three for chiefs and petty officers), and ratings in square-cut vests

and jumpers, individualized only by the ribbons of their cap-tallies (see **Figure 18**).¹ As much of a pique to national pride as it sometimes was to be taken for a British “tar”,

Canadian sailors were

proud of their rig: if

officers are remembered

for the snobbery of their

accounts with Gieves, the

British haberdasher, so too

were many sailors heavily

indebted to Halifax and

Victoria tailors for their

form-fitting, wide bell-

bottomed “tiddly” uniforms.² At the same time, for all the ambition of officials in the

Department of External Affairs that Canadian representation in China be buttressed by

the RCN because of the prestige inherent in a naval vessel, the fact remained that a

Canadian warship still derived much of that prestige from the White Ensign, symbolic of

the unity of the imperial fleets, flying at her stern.



Figure 18: Vice-Admiral Brind inspecting the Seaman Division of HMCS *Crescent*, Shanghai, March 1949 (CFPU PMR 98-153).

¹ DND, Uniform Instructions for the Royal Canadian Navy [BRCN 108] (Ottawa: King’s Printer, 1951).

² Tyre and Berg interviews. In reviewing the personnel files of *Crescent*’s crew for preparation of the statistical database, one could not fail but notice the near-universal presence of letters from local tailors requesting the intervention of ships’ captains in the settling of overdue accounts.

There are underlying elements here of the old imperial rallying cry, “One flag, one fleet, one throne”, were it not for the very distinct national overtones imbuing the whole episode. While *Crescent’s* crew knew that they did not have to rigidly conform to British routines, Canadian pride was a definite factor in their determination to prove themselves a sterling element of the 8th Destroyer Flotilla with which they worked, and the gunners’ insistence on painting their barrels black to prove it. *Crescent* proudly displayed a maple leaf on either side of her

funnel - months before an official order from Ottawa was deemed necessary (see **Figure 4**). In addition, at her forepeak flew the Blue Ensign, on it the Dominion coat of arms emblazoned in the fly, and the Union Jack of the other destroyers



Figure 19: Ambassador Davis speaks with AB Paul Bernard on *Crescent’s* fo’c’s’le, against a backdrop of the Shanghai Bund (CFPU PMR 98-138).

reduced to a small corner (see **Figure 19**), proudly proclaiming that this was a Canadian Government Ship. All the indications from *Crescent’s* experience are that everyone involved, from all stations of life, and at all rank levels, were generally content with the form the Royal Canadian Navy had inherited from its British parent.

Yet, it has entered Canadian naval mythology that the RCN, which admittedly began the Second World War as little more than a “Home Port Division” of the Royal

Navy. strove inappropriately to continue that imitation, however pallid, into the postwar period. It has become accepted that the RCN's quest for a balanced fleet was undertaken in opposition to mainstream Canadian thought, and is best explained as nothing more than a conditioned response by generations of Canadian naval officers to exposure to Royal Navy training and operations. To these charges, Vice-Admiral Harry DeWolf - the architect of the postwar balanced fleet - answers for his generation of naval officers of the RCN with a simple but emphatic, "We were Canadian!"³ This statement, supported by *Crescent's* evidence, suggests there was something more complex at work in the relationship between the RCN and the RN.

Just as the question of "identity" perennially challenges Canadians, it has come to exercise students of the nation's navy. Proving that at least in the present the service is not that far removed from mainstream Canadian thought, it recently sponsored an historical conference whose theme was, "In Search of Canadian Naval Identity." Given this objective, it was somewhat contentious that the noted British military historian, Michael Howard, was asked to address the conference, whose participants included both naval personnel and civilian academics. His reaction was instructive: he "confessed to never having pondered the national issues then being discussed," and allowed, "It is

³ Interview, Vice-Admiral (ret'd) H.G. DeWolf, Ottawa, 12 March 1997. DeWolf was born in Bedford, NS, in 1903, enrolled through the RNCC in 1918, served as a midshipman in HMS *Resolution* in 1921, and by 1939 was captain of HMCS *St Laurent*. Admiral Jones brought him to NSHQ in 1942 as Staff Officer Plans, and he was captain (1943-44) of the RCN's greatest fighting ship, HMCS *Haida*. After the war, he commanded the carrier *Magnificent* before being appointed Flag Officer Pacific Coast (with, in 1949, *Crescent* under his command), and eventually CNS (1956-60). See MacFarlane, Canada's Admirals and Commodores, p. 17.

surely a very fine thing to be in quest of..., but I'm really not quite sure what I'd do if I found it."⁴ A later reviewer commented that the theme was "not inappropriate, yet it bespeaks an inferiority complex for which there is no justification."⁵

In 1949, the Mainguy commission had a very different view, and used the testimony of *Crescent's* people to help substantiate it. That testimony is now available, and describes a much more complex situation and set of attitudes than those presented in the commission's report. It has also been possible to supplement the testimony with service personnel records, available with certain restrictions for most of the ship's 14 officers and 187 men, several of whom granted interviews to the author. This body of material provides a unique vantage point for looking into the make-up of the postwar RCN, one that sheds important light on the nature of the service and puts The Mainguy Report in a fresh context.

• * •

A ship's society effectively consists of three classes: a large "working" body of post-adolescent labourers and skilled tradesmen (leading hands and below); they are overseen directly by a smaller, middle-aged, middle management class (chiefs and petty officers); and overall responsibility is vested in an again smaller, but relatively well educated, professional managerial (officer) class, with age and experience varying in accordance with rank (from junior sub-lieutenant to senior commander). Together

⁴ A Nation's Navy, "Introduction", p. 20.

⁵ W.A.B. Douglas, "Canada at sea: A naval medley" [review of A Nation's Navy], in The Beaver, Vol 78:4 (August / September 1998), p. 43.

comprising a ship's "complement", these groups typically are more broadly divided into the Wardroom (officers) and the Lower Deck (the non-commissioned ranks, or "ratings"). There is a certain mobility amongst the classes, primarily upward, and based upon promotion by merit and time in rank. One student of the mutinies, himself a lower decker, has observed, however, that "the class system aboard a warship may be more complex." There is an added layer to the basic structure:

Within the lower deck of the navy, the sailor's identity is closely linked with their trade. A sailor's accommodation on a ship is determined by it. [as are] their working location on [the] ship, types of duty watches that they will stand, and even pay. There even exists an old adage in the navy about being a "sailor first, tradesman second," which is clearly expressive of the dual nature of a sailor's identity.⁶

By this standard, not all sailors are necessarily seamen. In the postwar RCN, the various trades were grouped into "branches" corresponding roughly to the various officer occupations which oversaw their respective Divisions. The "Seamen" were the traditional boatswains and weapons rates, whose numbers had grown during the war with the infusion of operators for such new equipments as sonar and radar; together with the "Communications" (both Visual and Radio) trades, they fell under the "Executive" officers (not to be confused with the specific appointment of XO of a ship). The "Stoker Mechanics" and "Engine Room Artificers" (ERAs) were the managerial responsibility of the Engineering Officer. The new "Electrical" branch formed in 1945 (and re-organized in 1947) from those seaman and engineering trades responsible for power generation and

⁶ Master Seaman John Roach, "The 1949 mutinies of the 'Interim' Navy: Psychological effects of organizational changes and the Royal Canadian Navy" (paper prepared for Royal Military College of Canada War Studies 530 [Psychology of Warfare], 1 June 1998). P. 3.

distribution also now had their own officers. The “Artificers” maintained the weapons under the direction of the Ordnance Officer. The various “Writer”, “Stores”, “Cook” and “Steward” rates were supervised by the Supply Officer. Where the professional standing of officers could be discerned at a glance by the varicoloured “distinction cloth” separating their rings of gold braid,⁷ the men were identified by rank insignia on their left sleeve and branch badge on their right.

A rating’s status was further complicated (at least to the modern ear) by use of the terms “substantive” and “non-substantive” to designate rank and trade. Tucker’s description of this problem of classification remains the most succinct, while nonetheless conveying its complexity:

By VJ-day ratings in the RCN had been divided into twenty-five classes employed on shore and afloat, and within these there were further sub-divisions [see KRCN, chapters 8 and 9]. The duties of most main branches were obvious from their titles, such as stoker, shipwright, or plumber. Each branch was graded into what were known as “substantive ratings.” In the seaman branch they were ordinary [OS], able [AB], and leading seaman [LS], petty officer [PO], and chief petty officer [CPO]. In

⁷ This practise followed RN tradition. It was discontinued, except for medical officers, effective 1 January 1960. Before that time, the branches and respective colours, in order of their relative status (as demonstrated by their priority in The Navy List), were:

Executive	- none (black of uniform allowed to show through)
Engineering (E)	- maroon
Electrical (L)	- dark green
Instructor	- light blue
Medical	- scarlet
Supply & Secretariat (S)	- white
Constructor	- grey
Ordnance	- dark blue
Special Branch (SB)	- light green

A “fancy waistcoat” fashioned from broad diagonal bands of the various distinguishing cloths is on display in the Main Bar of HMCS *Bytown*, the Wardroom (naval officers’ mess) in Ottawa.

the other branches there were corresponding titles which almost always incorporated the terms leading, petty officer, and chief petty officer in the ratings corresponding to those grades in the seaman branch. In addition, many branches, more particularly the seaman branch, were further subdivided into sections specializing in such matters as gunnery or torpedo (seaman branch), diving (several branches), and shorthand-typing (writer branch). In these specialties men held various classifications and grades which were known as "non-substantive ratings."⁸

The complexity of the non-substantive advancement process is illustrated by the guide provided on the standard Personal History Form for gunnery ratings of the Seaman Branch (Figure 20):

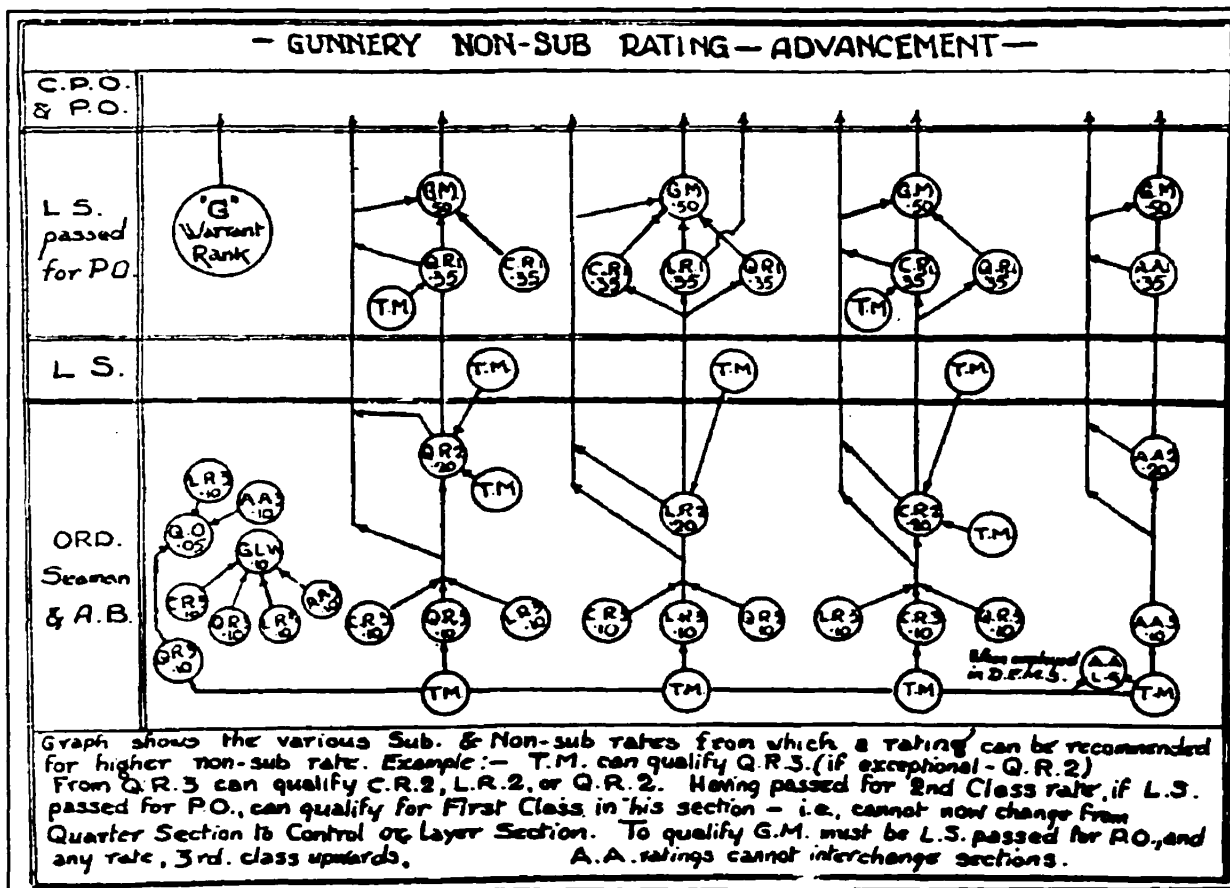


Figure 20: RCN, Gunnery Non-Substantive Rating Advancement Guide.

⁸ Tucker. Vol II, "Personnel and Training -Ratings," pp. 278-279.

Naval Service Headquarters established a standing Complement Committee in December 1945 to define the makeup of the 10,000-man Interim Navy. During 1946, it struggled not only to ensure that ships were manned by the right mix of working and supervisory ratings of the various trades required to steam, "fight" and administer a warship, but also to balance the competing demands of ships and shore establishments, and overall officer versus rating levels. Always with the ultimate interest of keeping the maximum number of ships in commission, the committee was rigorously efficient in justifying every position. Working from an initial estimated allocation of 1200 officers and 8800 men, and adopting as a temporary but extreme expedient the principle that roughly half of the total establishment could serve at sea, the Naval Staff believed that even within the 10,000-man limit the RCN would realize its goal of manning the equivalent of a carrier task force: one light fleet carrier, two cruisers, and eight fleet destroyers (four *Tribals*, two "V"-class, and two *Crescents*).⁹ However obvious the general requirements of individual vessels, the overall juggling act was anything but simple. The Committee found that in defining complements to meet "all commitments on the minimum basis to enable ships to be operational, and Fleet Establishments to have the required personnel to carry out their functions efficiently", they could not avoid

⁹ DHH 112.3M2, [Naval Historian's extracted précis of] NHS 1650-26, Memorandum to Cabinet, "Navy Post-War Organization and Composition," 12 December 1946. In contrast to the RCN's 50:50 sea-shore ratio, most other navies (such as the RN and USN) had adopted a 40:60 split to allow for more manning flexibility and greater opportunity for ratings with families to enjoy shore postings. Since the DHH "NHS" précis contains references which are not on the main file at the NAC, while the complete memoranda and minutes of the latter provide better context, both sources must be used. The NAC holding is RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 455, and will be denoted in subsequent notes by "NSS".

exceeding the overall limit, and their initial attempt demanded 1517 officers and 9344 ratings (total, 10.861).¹⁰ It was not until its 72nd meeting, on 28 October 1946, that “Pursuant to Minutes 12-4, 35-5, 49-1, 49-2, 51-1, 51-2, 51-3, 52-2, 52-3 and 52-4, the Committee approved a complement of officers and ratings for a Crescent Class Destroyer...”.¹¹

The amplifying attachments described a wartime operational complement for the destroyer of fourteen officers and 243 ratings. Peacetime realities, however, demanded a more pragmatic application.

Manning efficiencies could be achieved by accepting a principle of reduced “peacetime training” crews, which allowed that the minimum operational requirements for

BRANCH	RANK	AUTH'D WAR	AUTH'D PEACE	MAR 49 ACTUAL
Executive	LCdr	1	1	1
	Lt or SLt	7	6	5
	Gunner	1	1	2
Ordnance	Lt or SLt	1	1	1
Engineering	LCdr (E)	1	1	1
Electrical	Lt (L)	1	1	1
Supply	Lt (S)	1	1	1
Surgeon	Lt	1		1
Other	Lt (SB)			1
Total		14	12	14

Figure 21: HMCS *Crescent* - Officer Complement

mobilization of the interim

navy could be met if “non-substantive rates were up to full Wartime strength... on the assumption that the balance of the Wartime complement could be filled by men under

¹⁰ NSS 1279-22, vol 3, “Interim Report of Complement Committee,” 19 November 1946. Attached as appendices to this report are two over-size charts, respectively for officers and ratings, listing the projected rank/trade requirements of every “afloat” and “ashore” (“east”, “west”, and “miscellaneous”) establishment.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, “Minutes of the 72nd Meeting of the Complement Committee,” 28 October 1946.

training or partially trained reserves."¹² Few economies could be achieved in the officer complement, which projected a peacetime allowance (see **Figure 21**) of a total of eight executive branch officers (the Captain, an Executive Officer, and four junior lieutenants or sub-lieutenants plus one warrant officer gunner, all to act as bridge watchkeepers and divisional officers), and one each of ordnance, engineering, electrical and supply officers. This was to be augmented in wartime only by an additional watchkeeper and a surgeon. The real economy of scale was to be found in the lower deck complement, and the Committee authorized *Crescent* a peacetime training crew of 193 men (see **Figure 22**).

BRANCH	RANK	AUTHORIZED		MARCH 1949	
		WAR	PEACE	ACTUAL	
Seaman*	CPO	3	2	5	
	PO	7	8	9	
	LS	12	10	9	
	AB / OS	106	77	56	79
Communication	CPO	0	0	1	
	PO	2	2	2	
	LS	6	2	2	
	AB / OS	15	10	4	9
Engine Room*	CPO	2	2	6	
	PO	18	14	18	
	LS	12	11	10	
	AB / OS	25	23	26	60
Artificers	CPO	1	1	5	
	PO	7	7	4	
	LS	0	0	3	
	AB / OS	0	0	1	13
Supply	CPO	0	0	2	
	PO	7	7	8	
	LS	7	6	0	
	AB / OS	13	11	16	26
TOTAL		243	193	187	

Figure 22: HMCS *Crescent*, Complement by Branch and Rank.

* Includes elements later joined to form the Electrical Branch, reorganized in 1947.

¹² *Ibid.*, "Interim Report," 19 November 1946.

It is instructive to compare these figures to the original design allocation of a mid-1930s destroyer. No detailed official pre-war complement figures are available, but one survey notes in passing that “At the outbreak of war the [lower deck] complement of [fleet] destroyers was 208, including 4 W/T and 4 V/S ratings and two cooks.”¹³ The same author later describes that it was typical for wartime destroyer complements to approach the 250-man figure.¹⁴ In 1949, although *Crescent* carried only nine communications rates, her authorized peacetime complement was 14, and it was envisioned that in wartime this number would swell to 23. She was also authorized seven cooks in peacetime and nine in war (nine were actually borne for the cruise to China).

This phenomenon of crew inflation, as between the 1930s and the late 1940s, was a direct consequence of wartime weapon system development. Rather than delivering the savings in personnel so often promised by technology, whole additional systems of equipment had to be fitted to allow ships to survive and operate effectively against the ever-more sophisticated weapons and tactics of the enemy. The accompanying growth in

¹³ March, *British Destroyers*, p. 350. Wireless Transmitter and Visual Signaller were both trades of the Communications Branch; in that branch alone, they would be augmented by the wartime requirements for Coders. There are no similar specific references to officer complement. The RN *Navy List, January 1939* shows that none of the “J”, “L”, or “M”-classes were yet completed (and therefore no officers assigned), but some of the then-slightly larger *Tribals* were just being commissioned. A typical ship in that class had an officer complement of just six: one each of commander, lieutenant-commander, lieutenant, sub-lieutenant and commissioned officer; the only allowance for a representative of a branch other than the Executive was a lieutenant-commander (Engineer). By way of comparison, the smaller but typical *River*-class destroyer in the RCN on the eve of war similarly carried six officers: the captain, a first lieutenant, three other bridge watchkeepers (usually a combination of one each of lieutenant, sub-lieutenant and gunner), and an engineer. See *The Navy List, 1 April 1939*, pp., 19-21.

¹⁴ March, *British Destroyers*, p. 427.

numbers of personnel was especially apparent amongst the new “operator” trades, such as sonar, radar, direction finding, and gun fire control. The increase was exacerbated by the fact that the original ship designs could not accommodate all the additional people:

“Congestion [sic] has been caused by radar, machinery in mess spaces, additional fan vents, metadyne compartments for power-worked guns, ice cream [makers], water purifiers and coolers, coamings to magazine scuttles and lockers for additional men.”¹⁵

Even at the reduced peacetime strength, shipboard accommodation was cramped, and not just for the junior ratings. One chief petty officer testifying before the Mainguy Commission reported that “On our ship there is one complaint we have in our mess, that’s the overcrowding of the mess. We have eight men at the present time in our mess, and there is about room for five and the complement calls for six.”¹⁶

The overall numbers of officers and ratings borne in *Crescent* for the cruise to China (the “March 1949 Actual” listings given in the figures) do not appear to be far removed from the established peacetime complements. The subtle differences in the trade and branch distribution, however, are significant, and will be examined in the next chapters. Before delving into them, it is useful to take a closer look, first at *Crescent*’s place in the overall complement scheme, and then at the social make-up of her crew.

On the surface, *Crescent*’s 200 men out of 10,000 (only one-fiftieth) seems a mere pittance of the total force. Placing her numbers against the sea-going half makes for a fairer comparison, but still only reduces the portion to one-twenty-fifth. The reality of the

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Audette Papers, “Testimony, *Crescent*”, p. 1897.

RCN's postwar manning situation, however, gave *Crescent* a much greater significance. Through most of 1946, she was the only sea-going vessel on the West Coast other than the cruiser *Uganda*; on the East, there were only the carrier *Warrior* and the destroyer *Micmac* (see Appendix 3, "Royal Canadian Navy - Ships in Commission, August 1945 - December 1955"). By March 1949, the RCN's goal of a balanced force had been approached only to the extent that the ships in active commission comprised one carrier, one cruiser, four destroyers (two others were in major refit) and two frigates. The actual personnel strength of the Navy similarly stood at about the three-quarter mark of the 10,000-man establishment: 1137 officers and 7017 men (total, 8154) (see Appendix 2, "RCN Actual vs Authorized Strengths"). Given the reduced manning levels of all ships, and the unique circumstances of the complements of the heavy ships (the cruiser was established for new entry and junior officer training, and the carrier was focussed on the special needs of the Air Department), *Crescent* more nearly represented at least one-tenth of the seaborne RCN. She was, moreover, the only ship in continuous commission through the years 1945-49.

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Because of the small number of officers borne in the ship, no useful statistical analysis can be made of their necessarily unique career paths. However, even in their individuality, the members of *Crescent*'s wardroom provide a snapshot of the larger postwar Canadian naval officer corps.¹⁷

¹⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the biographical sketches which follow have been drawn from a variety of sources: The Navy List [dates various]; MacFarlane, Canada's Admirals and Commodores; NAC, PRC, personnel files; DHH/BIOG official biographies; and

David Walter Groos, the commanding officer, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on 20 April 1918, to parents recently emigrated from England, although they were of Dutch extraction. The family moved to Canada when he was two, and was residing in Victoria, British Columbia when he decided to follow in the footsteps of his older brother, Harold, to enter the RCN as a Cadet in August 1935. After the Royal Naval College of Canada (RNCC) was closed in 1923 due to severe budget reductions, the only practical alternative for the initial training of officers was the Royal Navy, and arrangements were made for Canadian cadets to take part in the British "Special Entry" scheme, under which the RN accepted candidates too old for entry through its naval college, HMS *Dartmouth*. Already possessing senior matriculation, candidates

... wrote Civil Service exams in Canada, elected to go either the executive, engineering or supply routes, and as 17/18 year old cadets, sailed off to the UK for training. They often arrived in plain clothes before being introduced to a naval tailor. After several years of midshipman and lieutenant training and service with the RN, the Special Entry would eventually find his way back to Canada or to an RCN ship.¹⁸

From 1924 until the re-opening of a Canadian naval college (HMCS *Royal Roads*) in 1942, 138 young men joined the RCN under this scheme. Groos was part of Special

interviews with the participants. All personal information from non-public sources has been handled within the meaning of "consistent use" as defined by *The Privacy Act*.

¹⁸ Laurie Farrington, "RCN Special Entries - 1924 to 1941," in *Starshell*, Vol VII, No 3 (Summer 1998), p. 16. See Rear-Admiral (ret'd) Richard Leir, "Big Ship Time": The Formative Years of RCN Officers Serving in RN Capital Ships," in *The RCN in Retrospect*, pp. 74-95. A good appreciation of the experience is given in the John Winton novel, *We Joined the Navy* (London: Michael Joseph, 1959). Although written in the mid-1950s, it describes a selection and training environment little changed from the inter-war years, and under which two generations of Canadian naval officers were introduced to their profession.

Entry #38, which embarked in the training ship HMS *Frobisher* on 28 August 1935, and he was rated the “the most capable cadet of the batch.”¹⁹ For the next four years, Groos saw service in battleships, aircraft carriers and cruisers of the Home and Mediterranean Fleets, names which would resonate in the coming years - *Hood*, *Glorious*, *Shropshire*.²⁰

The Mainguy Report singled out this “big ship time” for special criticism as a method of training Canadian naval officers. “Whatever training an officer may have received in these branches of essential knowledge [Naval tradition, seamanship, divisional duties, and principles of leadership] in the Royal Navy,” the commissioners concluded, “can only be considered remote from the Canadian scene and somewhat alien to the Canadian method of life.”²¹ Rear-Admiral R.L. Hennessy followed Groos through *Frobisher* in 1936. Over the course of his career, he held a number of important personnel and training appointments, making him well qualified to express a different opinion:

I think to this day that this was absolutely first class training, for a variety of reasons..., in the Cadet Training Cruiser. This is what I might call “hands-on training” because in the Quarterdeck Division there was one Petty Officer, one Leading Seaman, one Able Seaman and all the rest of the hands were the Cadets. We learned the hard way by literally getting

¹⁹ Groos pers file, Secretary of the Admiralty to CNS, “Report on Canadian Naval Cadets,” 24 August 1936. It elaborated, “He is not clever, but has a double share of common sense which amply makes up for any lack of brains.”

²⁰ The last of the great British battlecruisers, HMS *Hood* was sunk by the German battleship *Bismarck* at the outset of its epic dash into the North Atlantic in May 1941. The aircraft carrier *Glorious* was lost to German battlecruisers in June 1940 during the latter stages of the Norwegian campaign. The cruiser *Shropshire* was part of Force “H” which hunted and sank the *Bismarck* to avenge the loss of *Hood*.

²¹ The Mainguy Report, pp. 32 and 37.

our hands dirty, doing routine Seaman's tasks that we would be supervising in the years to come.²²

Crescent's first commanding officer was one of Groos's classmates in *Frobisher*.

Captain (ret'd) C.P. Nixon also remembers those days as professionally rewarding:

I thought it was good practical training. We were under instruction in class during most of the day, but we scrubbed the decks and worked a lot with the men. I think that was the best thing, our close proximity to the people we were eventually supposed to take command of.²³

As for whether such training alienated them from Canadian life, Hennessy remembers being upbraided by his Royal Navy Divisional Officer for "indulging in too great a degree of familiarity" with his sailors. On his first appointment to a Canadian warship, the destroyer HMCS *Assiniboine*, when she was commissioned in the fall of 1939 under

²² Seasoned Sailors: Vice-Admiral R.L. [Ralph Lucien] Hennessy (Set 3, No. 3), interviewed by John Frank, Ottawa, 26 March 1997. Hennessy was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on 5 September 1918, although his family emigrated to Canada when he was two, and his father became a career officer in the army. After spending the first four years of the war at sea, first in *Assiniboine* and then in *Restigouche*, he was drafted ashore in September 1943 as Executive Officer of the RCNVR training establishment *Kings* and, promoted to the rank of Acting Commander, became commanding officer of the Reserve Officer Training Establishment from February to September of 1944. He returned to sea in command of *Assiniboine* and in 1945 commissioned the first Canadian-built *Tribal*-class destroyer, HMCS *Micmac*, which he commanded until the spring of 1947. Upon completion of the RCAF Staff College Course, he was confirmed in the rank of Commander and served as Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel through the critical year of 1948-49. He returned to Halifax in the summer of 1949 to establish the Junior Officers' Technical and Leadership Course. He later served as XO of the Canadian training cruiser *Quebec* (formerly *Uganda*), and commanded the modernized *Algonquin* (1954-56) as Commander of the 1st Canadian Escort Squadron. In 1958, he returned to NSHQ as Director of Naval Training, and, appointed Commodore and Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel in 1960, oversaw a number of important personnel selection and training studies from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s. He retired in 1969, in the rank of vice-admiral, holding the position of Chief of Personnel in the unified Canadian Forces.

²³ Seasoned Sailors: Captain C.P. [Pat] Nixon (Set 1, No. 3), interviewed by John Frank, Ottawa, 20 January 1995, minute 6:00.

Commander Rollo Mainguy, Hennessy also recalls noting “a remarked degree of informality in relations between officers and men.”²⁴ The ship’s company was composed entirely of pre-war permanent force officers and ratings, and Hennessy’s clear inference was that they were quite comfortable with a pattern of behaviour at such odds with that of the Royal Navy, and which had become well-entrenched in the interwar RCN.

In August 1939, his training completed, Groos was appointed to the *River*-class destroyer, HMCS *Restigouche*, which had been newly commissioned in the RCN the previous year. He first saw action in June 1940 in the evacuation of British and French forces at Dunkirk. In June 1941, at the same time that *Restigouche* was assigned to the Newfoundland Escort Force for mid-ocean escort duties, Groos was made the Executive Officer. Two months later, the ship was present as an escort for the Atlantic Charter summit at Argentia, where he met both Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt. During his time in *Restigouche*, he served under two future Canadian admirals, Horatio Nelson Lay and D.W. “Debbie” Piers (who would be Executive Officer of *Magnificent* at the time of her incident in March 1949). As well, he came to know - and be known favourably by - the Captains(D [Destroyers]) at St John’s, Rollo Mainguy (from November 1941 to August 1942) and Harold Grant (to March 1943). He also met

²⁴ Interview, Rear-Admiral R.L. Hennessy, with author, Ottawa, 25 February 1999. For all the praise of Hennessy, Nixon, Leir and others of their big ship time, none of it was to say that the training should not be done in Canada. Hennessy was probably speaking for many of his contemporaries when he testified before the Mainguy Commission (Audette Papers, vol 14-2, p. 68 [printed with permission]) that “We should have a Naval College and Cadet training cruiser.” Earlier, *ibid*, he had commented that “It seems to me that the RN man gives unquestioning obedience to his officer once he is an officer, whereas an RCN man will give his unquestioning obedience to his officer [only] once he has proved [his credibility as] an officer.”

the captain of the corvette *Amherst*, Lt (RCNVR) Louis Audette, one of the future members of the Mainguy Commission. Their friendship was solidified when Groos received his own commands, first of the corvette *Collingwood* (December 1942 to June 1943), and then of *Restigouche* in June 1943, and their respective ships were members of Escort Group C-4 on the North Atlantic run between St John's and Londonderry.

Under Groos's command, *Restigouche* later was present off Normandy for the D-Day landings. He was twice mentioned in despatches and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) for "gallantry and outstanding service in the face of the enemy." He also came to be recognized for his inter-personal skills in adroitly handling the range of problems which arise in a ship's company. While he was commanding *Collingwood*, Captain(D) Grant observed that he was "Keen, cheerful and conscientious. ... Takes an exceptional interest in his men and is a most promising all round officer. ... This officer is a first class tonic for a slack ship."²⁵ It was not only the respect of his superiors which Groos enjoyed. The father of one young seaman in *Collingwood* was so favourably impressed by the reports home from his son that he took the exceptional step of writing to the Chief of Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Percy Nelles, in appreciation of "how true the adage is 'Its [sic] the little things that count':"

I desire to call your attention to what I consider a wonderful gesture..., namely that from what my son advises, [his captain] took some of the ratings under his care and tutored them for Leading Seamans [sic] rating on the last trip home. My son stated the Commanding Officer was responsible whereby he, and I hope others, were able to pass their examination.

²⁵ Groos pers file, S206, 21 January 1943, and S206, 10 March 1943.

If this condition obtains on other ships then I am free to confess, those in authority deserve the highest commendation for their interest in the ratings. ... As an old merchant Seaman, to me the action of this Commander is such that not only does it create confidence amongst the ratings, but we parents are appreciative the officers of our ships are interested in the welfare and future of our boys.²⁶

A year later, the Commodore(D) in Londonderry praised Groos for defusing “a difficult case of indiscipline [which] occurred in [*Restigouche*] in mid-ocean” in January 1944:

...it concerned four experienced ratings and a draft of young seamen, who had joined this their first ship only a week previously. Groos dealt with this matter promptly, firmly and correctly, showing good powers of leadership and knowledge of his men. I mention this incident as being much to his credit and assuring the fine record of his Ship during the past year.²⁷

By mid-1944, Groos was barely twenty-six years old. He had served nine continuous years at sea, the last two of them in command of ships in an active theatre of war. Young, handsome,

confident and competent, he was every inch the perfect example of a modern naval officer (see **Figure 23**). Grant had recommended Groos “would do well as a term

Lieutenant at Naval



Figure 23: LCdr David Groos, on the bridge of HMCS *Crescent*, February 1949 [NAC PA-176712].

²⁶ *Ibid.*, [name removed from copy to file] to Nelles, 21 May 1943.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, S206, 3 October 1944; and, Audette Papers, vol 12-15, Simpson to Audette, 21 June 1950.

College.”²⁸ and in December 1944 he was drafted ashore to take up the appointment of Executive Officer of Canada's new naval college, HMCS *Royal Roads*.

The need for a permanent officer training establishment had been determined in the dark days of the fall of 1940, as the Naval Staff reassessed the future prospects of the RCN and tried to come to grips with the expanding demand for officers. The Dunsmuir estate in Esquimalt, BC had been acquired by the navy and it offered a perfect training venue, close to the existing naval base on the Pacific coast and far from the action of the North Atlantic. With the first large batch of corvettes due to be commissioned in the spring of 1941, the need for officers was immediate, so *Royal Roads* began as a site for the training of RCNVR candidates, and the first course of “ninety day wonders” arrived in January 1941. The Navy’s long-range plan, however, remained for the eventual acquisition of cruisers and larger destroyers for the permanent force, and that called for a more comprehensive officer training. Some 600 Probationary Sub-Lieutenants passed through the doors of *Royal Roads* before all RCNVR training was consolidated at HMCS *Kings* in Halifax in the fall of 1942, and *Royal Roads* was re-established as the Royal Canadian Naval College. The first group of 100 permanent force cadets to undertake the two-year course arrived in September 1942, and by late-1944, when Groos became Executive Officer, the programme was well-established.²⁹

²⁸ Groos pers file, S206, 10 March 1943.

²⁹ The shift of RCNVR training to *Kings* and the establishment of *Royal Roads* on a permanent basis is generally interpreted as an example of the RCN being willing to look after its own interests at the expense of the RCNVR. See March, “The Evolution of a College,” *op. cit.*, pp. 56-61 ff; and, Glover, “Officer Training and the Quest for Operational Efficiency,” pp. 76-79 and 93-101. This view is usually set out without full

Groos had not completed a half year at *Royal Roads* when the European war came to an end. The RCN was preparing a Pacific task force, but demobilization was sweeping the nation and the prospects of the postwar navy were anything but solid. Offered a position at his father-in-law's firm on the London Stock Exchange (he had married in England in 1942), Groos tendered his release. Apparently his heart was not really in the thought of civilian life, and just before the effective date he withdrew the application. The withdrawal was accepted, and without any apparent ill-feelings. His abilities had been recognized by a future CNS, and Groos's career immediately resumed with full force. That fall, he was among the small group of naval officers selected to attend the new RCAF Staff College in Toronto, and on completion, in August 1946, he was posted to NSHQ as Staff Officer (Strategy) in the Directorate of Naval Plans and Intelligence. He held that position until January 1948, when he became the first naval officer to attend the newly opened National Defence College for advanced courses at Kingston, Ontario. While he was there, the Chief of Naval Personnel reviewed his file, with the observation, "This officer, having been ashore since December 1944, is due for [a] sea appointment."³⁰ In September, Groos returned to Esquimalt to await the availability of a fleet destroyer. That was *Crescent*, and he assumed command of the ship on 16 November 1948.³¹

appreciation of the strategic context in the fall of 1940 (as described in Chapter 3). Despite the recent success in the Battle of Britain, the United States was not yet involved in the war, and a separate British peace could not be dismissed.

³⁰ Groos pers file, CNP to CNS, 21 June 1948.

³¹ Groos was promoted commander on 1 July 1949. When *Crescent* was paid off into reserve on 1 December 1949, he immediately transferred (along with the bulk of his crew) to commission *Sioux*, leaving that ship in June 1950 to become XO of the RCN air

The only other officers serving in *Crescent* who also had been in the permanent force RCN before the outbreak of war in 1939 were the two warrant gunners. Charles Corbett was born in Victoria in 1909, and joined the RCN as an ordinary seaman in 1928. Through the 1930s he served in various Canadian destroyers and establishments, and took non-substantive training at the RN Torpedo School, HMS *Vernon*. In September 1939, he was serving in HMCS *Fraser* and still only a Leading Seaman. He was promoted Acting Petty Officer in December, and in May 1940 returned to *Vernon* for advanced training. Back in Canada by the end of the year, he spent all of 1941 at sea in the destroyer *Skeena*, coming ashore to take up training positions in the Canadian Torpedo Schools at *Naden* and *Stadacona* for most of the rest of the war. By January 1943 he had been promoted to Chief Petty Officer, and late in 1944 he received a commissioning warrant as an Acting Gunner(T) for continued employment as an instructor. In August 1945, he arrived in England as part of the commissioning crew of the intended third *Crescent*-class destroyer, but when that was cancelled he returned to Canada and the Torpedo School at *Naden*. He joined *Crescent* in September 1948.³² David Scott, the second Acting Gunner, was born in Winnipeg in 1918, had joined the RCN in 1937, and

station. HMCS *Shearwater*. He was promoted captain on 1 July 1953 while serving as Director of Officer Personnel in NSHQ, and served briefly as XO of HMCS *Niagara*, the naval division of the Canadian Joint Staff (Washington). He commanded *Ontario* from September 1954 until assuming command of the new officer entry establishment, HMCS *Venture*, in August 1956. He retired in January 1961, and went on to become the Conservative Member of Parliament for Victoria (1963-1970). He died of cancer on 11 January 1976, at the age of 57, and was buried at sea off Race Rocks, in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, from the destroyer-escort HMCS *Restigouche (II)*.

³² Corbett's commission was confirmed in September 1949. After cross-training with the USN as a diving officer, he was promoted lieutenant in 1952. He retired in May 1962.

was an Able Seaman on a gun-layer rating (LR3) course in England when the war broke out. In October 1939, he was in the crew which commissioned HMCS *Assiniboine* on her transfer from the RN to the RCN, and in January 1940 he joined *Restigouche*, where the Gunnery Officer was then-Lieutenant Groos. At the end of 1940, he was transferred to the older destroyer *St Clair*, and on coming ashore in July 1941 was promoted Acting Petty Officer. He spent most of the rest of the war in various east coast training establishments: the new entry school at *Cornwallis*, the gunnery school at *Stadacona*, and the Canadian work-up base in Bermuda. HMCS *Somers Isles*. By May 1944, he had reached the rank of Chief Petty Officer. On the return of peace, he was confirmed in the rank of Petty Officer, and after further time at *Stadacona*, in May 1947 was sent to England on the long gunnery course. On completion, he was accepted for a commission in January 1948, and by May had been appointed to *Crescent* for training as a bridge watchkeeper. Due to the ship's hectic schedule, his training had not progressed well and he was about to be re-assigned when Groos arrived. Scott's former Divisional Officer proposed to keep him on, and did see him through it, granting the Gunner his certificate during the course of the cruise.³³

The Engineer was the only other officer who had been to sea in the pre-war years. John Somers was born in 1911, hailing from Cape Breton Island, and joined the Volunteer Reserve Half-Company in Halifax as an ordinary seaman shortly after it was established in the mid-1920s. His attendance was sporadic, and he apparently also served

³³ Scott's commission also was confirmed in September 1949. He served in Korea in *Athabaskan*, and by 1958 was promoted lieutenant-commander. He held a variety of gunnery and staff positions before retiring in March 1969.

as a second lieutenant with the militia coast artillery at Halifax in 1934. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree and took up a civilian occupation in machine design, and therefore was immediately accepted as a Lieutenant(E) for "Hostilities Only" when he volunteered in February 1941. His only sea time during the war was "for Engine Room Training" in the first of the Canadian *Tribal*-class destroyers, *Iroquois*, from March to August 1943, obtaining his Engine Room Watchkeeping Certificate that June.³⁴ At some point he contracted tuberculosis, and he was discharged medically unfit in November 1945, but, with no further deterioration, given the shortage of Engineering Officers in the postwar RCN, he was re-enrolled as a Lieutenant-Commander(E) in mid-1946, and assigned to the Ships and Dockyard staff of NSHQ. He was appointed to *Crescent* on 27 October 1947. By January 1949, with some fifteen months in the destroyer, he was the officer who had been with her the longest.³⁵

Except for the two young sub-lieutenants on board, all of the ship's other officers also had entered the navy by way of the Volunteer Reserve, having converted to the permanent force after the cessation of hostilities. Lieutenant (TAS [Torpedo and Anti-Submarine]) Frank Saunders had lied about his age (he was born in Saskatoon in 1922) to join the RCNVR in 1938. He arrived in *Naden* for training in July 1939. As a telling

³⁴ From the dates given on his personal history card, he probably was aboard *Iroquois* at the time of the mutiny in that ship on 19 July 1943. See Michael Whitby, "The Iroquois Mutiny" (paper presented to the Ottawa Military Historical Colloquium, Ottawa, 26 November 1997) [publication pending]. This incident, and the history of others in the RCN, will be examined in the next chapter.

³⁵ He was promoted Commander(E) in July 1949, and served as the engineer in *Magnificent* (1951-53) before becoming a Captain(E) in 1955. The tuberculosis recurred and eventually killed him, while still in the service, on 15 December 1961.

example of either the RCN's erratic record keeping or its quixotic manning practices in the early war years. although he had qualified as a sonar detector, Saunders appears not to have served at sea until being drafted to the Esquimalt-based minesweeper *Guysborough* in June 1942. This had not prevented him being rated, by February 1942, an Acting Petty Officer. By the end of that year, he had been selected for officer training, and attended the extended course at HMCS *Kings* from November 1942 until April 1943. In October 1943, he was loaned to the Royal Navy, where he qualified as a submariner and was employed in that service. Upon transferring to the permanent RCN in September 1945, he was appointed to the British cruiser HMS *Belfast* in Hong Kong, where that ship was supervising repatriation and resettlement operations in the Far East. Before returning to Canada, he took the Royal Navy's year-long TAS Specialist Course. Arriving back in Canada in January 1948, he served briefly at each of the anti-submarine schools in *Stadacona* and *Naden* before joining *Cayuga* for the Pacific Squadron exercises off Hawaii in the fall of 1948. When that ship went into refit, he was appointed to *Crescent* on 4 January 1949.³⁶

The Executive Officer, Gerry Wood, was born in Vancouver in 1920 and had completed two years of university when he joined the Volunteer Reserve in December 1940. He was in the first RCNVR class to pass through *Royal Roads*, but spent his first year after graduation attached to the Sorel sub-section of the Montreal naval headquarters,

³⁶ Saunders was promoted lieutenant-commander (TAS) in November 1951, and saw action in Korea while serving in *Nootka* through 1952. He commanded the a/s frigate *La Hulloise* after she was modernized and re-commissioned in 1958-60, and held other staff a/s positions before retiring in 1968.

HMCS *Hochelaga II*, overseeing construction activities in the Davie Shipyard. In June 1942, he was sent to Halifax for duty with the Examination Service. He was not assigned to a corvette until he went to *Snowberry* in January 1943, coincident with his promotion to lieutenant. After attending a short navigation course at *Kings* (November 1943 - March 1944), he was back to sea in the corvette *Moose Jaw* in April 1944, and was present off Normandy "for invasion duties" with that ship. After another short spell at *Kings*, now as a navigation instructor, he was part of the crew which commissioned the cruiser *Ontario* in May 1945. They sailed to join the British Pacific Fleet, but arrived too late to see action and were employed instead on relief duties throughout the Far East. Upon return to Canada late in 1945, he transferred to the permanent force, and stayed with the cruiser through her period in reserve. He left in May 1947 to take a formal "Divisional Officers Course" at *Naden* before being attached as a staff officer to the local Victoria reserve division, *Malahat*. *Crescent* was the first destroyer he had ever sailed in, and he joined her just before Christmas 1948.³⁷

Three members of *Crescent's* Wardroom were British by birth. The Ordnance Officer, Hugh Leonard, was born in Ilford, Essex in 1920. When he joined the Volunteer Reserve in 1942, ordnance was a sub-specialty of the Engineering Branch. He passed through *Royal Roads* in May-August 1942, before proceeding to England for a year-long gun mounting course with the RN, and employment thereafter as a staff officer in NSHQ. Upon Ordnance being established as a separate Branch in 1946, Leonard transferred to

³⁷ Wood was promoted lieutenant-commander in January 1951, and after a tour in NSHQ commanded the reserve training minesweeper, *New Liskeard* (1956-57). He retired in February 1965, and died in Ottawa in 1997.

the permanent force. He returned to England for further specialist training before being appointed to the Naval Armament Depot in Dartmouth, and joined *Crescent*, his first ship, in December 1948.³⁸ The Supply Officer, William Jamieson (born in Glasgow in 1917) and the navigator, Kai Boggild (born in Haddiscoe, Norfolk in 1920) had both joined the Volunteer Reserve in 1940 as non-commissioned administrative writers. Whereas Jamieson progressed through the supply branch ranks to accept a commission in July 1945 (he was confirmed as a Lieutenant(S) in 1946),³⁹ Boggild transferred to the Executive Branch and attended the last VR course at *Royal Roads*, from May to September 1942. By January 1943, he was at sea, first in the minesweeper *Truro* and then *Sarnia*, for escort duties in the Western Atlantic. In 1944, he was promoted lieutenant, took a navigation course at *Kings*, and returned to sea as navigator of the frigate *Runnymede*, the Senior Officer's ship of Escort Group C-5. In April 1945, he was sent to England for a navigation specialist course, which he consolidated with advanced navigation training, again in England, in 1947-48. Upon return to Canada, he was appointed to the staff of FOPC, and from July to October 1948 was attached to the RCMP schooner *St Roch* for one of that ship's "exploratory surveys" of the Canadian Arctic. He joined *Crescent* on 30 January 1949, similarly on the strength of his navigation skills, and only for the duration of her Far East cruise.⁴⁰

³⁸ Having risen to the rank of Ordnance Commander, Leonard retired in September 1957.

³⁹ Jamieson joined *Crescent* in June 1948. He was promoted LCdr(S) in 1954 and retired in April 1966. *Crescent* was his only at-sea appointment.

⁴⁰ Boggild was promoted lieutenant-commander in 1951 to be appointed XO of *Iroquois* for action in Korea. On promotion to commander, he attended the Royal Naval College

There were two other officers assigned to *Crescent* because of the change in her orders at the end of January 1949. Surgeon-Lieutenant-Commander John Green was born in Trinidad in 1911. He had served briefly in the army Medical Corps in 1940 before transferring to the RCAF for the duration of the war. Upon demobilizing, he established a practice in Victoria, and in 1947 joined the RCNR at the *Malahat* Reserve Division. Learning of the RCN's intention to establish a proper medical branch (possibly through the intervention of Gerry Wood, who was also at *Malahat*), he transferred to the permanent force in 1948. His first trip at sea was supposed to be in *Ontario* for the 1949 Spring Cruise, but he was transferred to *Crescent* because of his apparent knowledge of tropical medicine (a premise with no actual foundation other than his place of birth).⁴¹ The other officer specially assigned for the China mission was Bill Lore, the reservist suggested by Arthur Menzies to act as a translator (see **Figure 24**). Born in Victoria in 1909, he claims to be the first non-white accepted into the



Figure 24: Lt(SB)(RCNR) William K. Lore (NAC PA 204705).

Canadian Navy. He was recruited into the Special Branch of the RCNVR in 1944 and

Greenwich in 1955, and commissioned the destroyer-escort *St Croix (II)* in 1958. Becoming a captain in 1962, he commanded the replenishment ship *Provider* in 1964-66, before retiring in March 1968. He resides in Halifax.

⁴¹ Green spent most of his subsequent career at the RCN Hospital at *Naden*. He eventually specialized in anaesthesiology, and reached the rank of acting/surgeon-captain before retiring in February 1962.

immediately loaned to the Royal Navy for translation duties with the British Pacific Fleet. His proudest moment came in September 1945, when he was serving in the battleship HMS *Duke of York*, and he was the first "British" officer to proceed ashore in Hong Kong to accept the surrender of Japanese forces there. When he eventually returned to Canada in 1947, it was "only to be told by NSHQ that it was impossible for me to be alive as the records showed that I 'was killed in action, sometime in 1945, somewhere in the South Pacific'!" He had to make several trips to Ottawa "before I was finally resurrected from the dead and demobilized in late June, 1947!" He was quite surprised to be called back into service in 1949 from his civilian job, in charge of the Department of Transport's Atlantic Transmitter Station at St Hubert, Quebec.⁴²

The Electrical Officer, Melvin Gardner, was born in Alexander, Manitoba in 1922. He enrolled in the Canadian Officer Training Corps (COTC) at the University of British Columbia in September 1940, and completed a degree in Electrical Engineering. This was a qualification highly sought by a service embarking upon technological expansion, and after enlisting in the RCNVR in April 1943, he was immediately employed in managing the refitting of Canadian warships with the latest electronic

⁴² Additional details from DHH, Lore BIOG file, Lore to Douglas, 14 May 1991. Upon returning to Canada, Lore resumed his post with the Department of Transport but maintained his reserve affiliation. In 1953 he was promoted LCdr(SB)(RCNR). He returned to the Far East in 1954, to serve as an Admiralty Civilian Officer in Singapore and with Combined Services Headquarters in Hong Kong, eventually settling there in 1957, where he continues to reside.

equipment. He was a late transfer to the RCN, in August 1946, and served at the fleet school in *Stadacona* before joining *Crescent* in June 1948.⁴³

At the bottom of the Wardroom's pecking order were the two sub-lieutenants. They had many shared circumstances which marked them as different from the other officers. To start with, they were by several years the youngest: George Wither was born in Port Arthur, Ontario in 1926, and Peter Birch-Jones in Estevan, Saskatchewan in 1925. They were also the only ones to enroll into the permanent force of the RCN during the war, entering the Royal Canadian Naval College as cadets in September 1943. They graduated from *Royal Roads* in July 1945, and both accepted commissions as midshipmen in the RCN, whereupon they were sent in September 1945 to consolidate their training in the "big ships" of the Royal Navy: HMS *Duke of York*, and the carrier *Implacable* (they also had a brief



Figure 25: SLt Peter Birch-Jones in the Chartroom of HMCS *Crescent*, January 1949 (NAC, PA-176713).

⁴³ Gardner ultimately was the most successful of *Crescent's* officers. He left the ship in November 1949, to be among the first RCN officers accepted for postgraduate training with the USN (1950) and MIT (1952). As a lieutenant-commander, he was back at sea in 1956 to help commission the new destroyer-escort, *Ottawa (II)*, and again in 1961 as Technical Officer of the 2nd Canadian Destroyer Squadron. He was promoted commodore in 1970, and became a rear-admiral in 1976 while on the staff of the Canadian Military Representative to NATO, before retiring in December 1977. He continues to reside in Brussels.

exposure to destroyers, Wither in *Wakeful*, and Birch-Jones in *Cowdray*). After additional courses at the RN College *Greenwich*, they returned to Canada to be assigned to *Crescent* at the end of November 1948 (see **Figure 25**). Their careers, however short so far, demonstrate just how small a service it actually was: they already had served under Groos at *Royal Roads*, and they had previously met Bill Lore in *Duke of York*.⁴⁴

The officers serving in *Crescent* in 1949 reflected the experience of the RCN over the previous full decade. Collectively, they encompassed the range of appointments afloat and ashore which Canadians had seen with their own service and the Royal Navy during the Second World War, and they had served in virtually every class of ship. To a remarkable extent, they also were representative of the make-up of the officer corps of the postwar RCN, and point to the massive transformation which that supposed bastion of tradition had undergone. In April 1939, with rearmament for war having been underway for almost three years, the RCN was still a small and insular service. The Navy List, April 1939, identifies some 127 serving officers: 85 Executive, 19 Engineering, 12 Paymasters, and 11 others.⁴⁵ Practically to a man, they had entered through either the former Royal Naval College of Canada prior to its closing, or the Special Entry Scheme

⁴⁴ Both officers were promoted to lieutenant while serving under Groos and followed him to *Sioux*. George Wither qualified as a TAS officer at the RN school, and commanded the a/s frigate *Victoriaville* after her modernization and re-commissioning in 1959, until retiring as a lieutenant-commander in June 1961. Peter Birch-Jones undertook his specialty training with the RN in gunnery, and returned to *Crescent* in 1956, after her modernization, as Squadron Gunnery Officer. He was XO of the destroyer-escort *Restigouche (II)* before getting his own command, *Margaree*, in 1967. He retired in December 1975, in the rank of commander, while serving as Queen's Harbourmaster at Esquimalt, and resides in Victoria.

⁴⁵ The Navy List, April 1939, pp. 12-15.

thereafter. All had undertaken their initial training and had some operational experience with the Royal Navy. Unlike the Royal Australian and other Dominion Navies, however, the ranks of the pre-war RCN were buttressed by hardly any serving or former RN officers. At the same time, only a small number of Canadian officers had been commissioned from the ranks (CFR). By January 1949, the numbers of the RCN officer corps had swollen to 1139, and the relative proportion of the Executive Branch to the others had diminished considerably, to less than one-third of the overall total. As the bulk of these additional officers held staff positions ashore, the same relative proportions naturally would not be seen in an operational destroyer, but *Crescent's* Wardroom does reflect the postwar appearance at sea of larger numbers of non-Executive Branch officers, in having not just an Engineer, but also Supply, Electrical and Ordnance Officers.

Other significant changes were afoot as well. It was impractical for the purposes of this dissertation to undertake a comprehensive study of the entire serving officer corps. Instead, a general survey was made of the Executive Branch, from information available in The Navy List for January 1949.⁴⁶ The most obvious difference can be discerned from

⁴⁶ Restricting the survey to the Executive Branch only was determined on the arbitrary basis that this group, despite the growing importance of technically trained officers, nonetheless continued to constitute the decision-making "power-holders" in the postwar RCN. It had the added advantage of making the numbers more manageable. Excluding also the air sub-branch (but including the commissioned and warrant gunners), the RCN Executive Branch as per the July 1949 edition of The Navy List comprised 381 individuals. A database was constructed by name, rank, entry plan, seniority date and naval education (ie, whether they passed through a Canadian Naval College or Special Entry Scheme). To confirm the tentative conclusions made on the basis of analysis of *Crescent's* Wardroom, it is proposed to undertake as a post-doctoral research project a similar comprehensive analysis of the of 1,139 personnel files of the entire RCN regular force officer corps.

the method of entry into the postwar navy (see **Figure 26**).⁴⁷ By 1949, barely fifteen per cent of the corps had seen service as professional naval officers in the inter-war years. Nearly one-third had enrolled in the permanent force during the war,⁴⁸ and as such also had received comprehensive professional training. A large proportion of

ENTRY SCHEME	#	%
RCN (Pre-war)	63	16.54%
RCN (Wartime)	115	30.18%
Postwar New Entry	13	3.41%
RCNVR (Wartime Transfer)	15	3.94%
RCNVR (Interim Force)	82	21.52%
RCNVR (Re-entry)	6	1.57%
RCNR	15	3.94%
CFR	63	16.54%
RN	9	2.36%

Figure 26: Officer Entry Scheme, Postwar RCN

these had passed through Canada's own naval college. While the proportion of former-RN officers was still low, the number of CFRs had increased somewhat. Even more dramatic was the appearance of a whole new group - the influx from the wartime Volunteer Reserve, who now constituted nearly another third of the officer corps. The Executive Branch officers in *Crescent's* Wardroom reflected this diversity, with one pre-war permanent force officer (the captain), two wartime entries into the permanent force (the two sub-lieutenants), three Interim Force transfers from the VR to the permanent

⁴⁷ Some arbitrary placements were necessary in the creation of this table. For example, Commander Patrick Budge fit three categories: he had joined the RN in 1922 as a Boy Seaman, transferred as an Able rating to the RCN in 1928, and commissioned from the ranks as a Gunner(T) in 1934. For the purposes of this table, he is counted amongst the "CFR" total, as that is considered his identifying characteristic. He certainly was recognized by his superiors for the insight that background provided him, in his being appointed XO of the new entry training centre, *Cornwallis*, when it re-opened later in 1949.

⁴⁸ For the purposes of this compilation (as for the similar one for ratings described later, anyone enrolling prior to October 1945 was counted as a "wartime" entry, as up until that time their attestation papers included an undertaking to serve anywhere and as required for the duration of hostilities.

force (the Executive Officer, Navigator-specialist, and TAS officer), and two commissioned from the ranks (the gunners). The variety of experience is broadened when it is considered that the two gunners had served in the pre-war navy, and two of the three VR officers had commissioned from the ranks during the war. In the close confines of a destroyer Wardroom, the presence of the several additional former-VR officers of the non-executive branches would have had a further leavening effect.

The pre-war homogeneity of the straight-stripe RCN officer corps was no more. In his research into the social background of the wartime navy, David Zimmerman was the first to acknowledge this, concluding that:

[The Volunteer Reservists] brought with them into the wartime navy peculiarly Canadian ideas about how the service should be organized and run. ... Although not representing a good cross-section of all Canadians... because of the strong British presence among the officers and its failure to accommodate French Canadians..., the Royal Canadian Navy had emerged by the end of the war as a Canadian institution, distinctly different from the Royal Navy."⁴⁹

He does not elaborate what these ideas were, however, or how the RCN differed from the RN, other than in a social sense. The recognition that the RCN had changed is nonetheless important, for the permanent force officers of the RCN certainly realized that the world as they knew it - their culture, as it were - was changing. They also recognized that they had no alternative but to adapt, and that it was the right thing to do. Appearing before the Mainguy Commission, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Grant, opined that if the RCN really was averse to change, "The right thing to do would [have been] to maintain the status quo after the war, had a very small navy...". Instead, he accepted that

⁴⁹ Zimmerman, "The Social Background of the Wartime Navy," p. 279.

reorganization was necessary for the survival of both the service and, ultimately, the country:

I think that the navy's desire to keep its place in the national defence establishment was really behind the policy of rapid [postwar] expansion in the navy. ... It was that desire... and the fact that world affairs were pretty tense, which of course they still are, caused us to expand a damn sight more rapidly than we could. We have always been short of officers. ... I quite agree that [maintaining the status quo] would have been the right thing to do. ... I do not think [bringing the VR officers in] was too well handled. It was a rather sloppy method of bringing them in....⁵⁰

For a culture faced with the necessity of change, social anthropologists offer two models of adaptation: revolution or acculturation.⁵¹ For the naturally conservative officers of the RCN, there was never any question of - nor a need for - a process other than integration. The evidence of Zimmerman's wartime data is that, as a social group, the VR officers - the men who would constitute the postwar transfers to the RCN - tended to come from the same middle class strata of Canadian society that typified the pre-war navy. However, the words "diversity" and "leavening" are used in the previous

⁵⁰ Audette Papers, vol 14-3, "Grant Testimony [NSHQ]," p. 3467.

⁵¹ The theoretical literature on the subject of cultures in crisis and their management of change is surprisingly weak. William A. Haviland, Cultural Anthropology (Fort Worth, Texas: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1990 [6th ed.]), defines revolution as "a revitalization movement from within directed primarily at the ideological system and the attendant social structure of a culture" (p. 427), and acculturation as "major culture changes that occur as a result of prolonged contact between societies" (p. 418).

Organization theorists provide different names to describe the same processes, but are similarly glib. One promising title, Jan Koolhaus, Organization Dissonance and Change (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1982), offers these important points as throw-away lines in the introduction: "integration theory conceals conflicts, whereas coercion theory emphasizes them in order to mobilize the forces of change towards a state of less conflict" (p. 4). The most workable (and readable) model is that described in William Bridges, Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1991), pp. 69-70ff, and *passim*.

paragraphs because it was precisely in the negative sense of these terms that the permanent force RCN viewed the admittance into their ranks of former Volunteer Reserve personnel. They did so not out of any reservations over their social background. Indeed, an argument can be made that wardroom life tended to attract men most likely to be accommodated to it. Rather, the distinction lay in the area of professional qualification: their training and experience. The full import of the postwar VR-infusion has remained unexplored because superficially - on the basis of any of the usual "social" measurement criteria - there were few outward differences between the pre-war and postwar officer corps.⁵²

The integration of the VRs as professional sea-going officers was, in the short-term, unsuccessful, and the impact of this will be discussed in detail below. Remaining for the moment at the social level, we see in *Crescent's* Wardroom a homogeneous group of men little different from that observed by Zimmerman.⁵³ All except three of the officers were married, a remarkable percentage, especially considering that the two sub-lieutenants were necessarily single, being under the allowable marrying age for officers of 25.⁵⁴ Two of the older officers had been married for over a decade, and all the others had entered matrimony during the war. Was there something about the dangers of the sea and

⁵² Glover, "Officer Training and the Quest for Operational Efficiency," *passim*, provides a basis of the necessary background for such an exploration, but stops short of this critical realization.

⁵³ Zimmerman. "The Social Background of the Wartime Navy," p. 277.

⁵⁴ The King's Regulations for the Government of His Majesty's Canadian Naval Service [short title. KRCN], (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1945), art. 70.50(1).

the uncertainties of war which craved a domestic anchor? In many other ways, they presented the very image of small-c conservative English Canada: white, protestant, and affluent.⁵⁵ Although only the two engineers had completed university degrees, all of the others (except the two gunners) possessed the equivalent of senior matriculation. Soon that would no longer be the minimum qualification. A meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee in September 1948 had determined that in future “the Service[s] would normally require officers to be graduates either of one of the Canadian Services Colleges or of a recognized university.”⁵⁶ The intention was to ensure the status of the naval officer corps as a recognized profession of arms. Minister Claxton opened that same meeting with the observation that the pay rates which were to go into effect on 1 October 1948 already supposed remuneration in kind. As such, in *Crescent*, the captain (as a lieutenant-commander with more than three years in rank) had an annual salary of \$3,516 (boosted by an additional monthly marriage allowance of \$30); a junior sub-lieutenant made only slightly less, at \$2,172; all were well within range of the \$2,836 average annual income of Canadian middle-class professionals.⁵⁷ There was only one Roman Catholic, the remainder all being Anglican, United or Presbyterian. With the obvious

⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, “Conservatism,” in The Canadian Encyclopedia, Volume I (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1985), p. 404.

⁵⁶ NAC. RG 24, Acc. 83-84/167, box 1636, NSS 4600-902/100 (“Recruiting & Entry, RCN - Officers”), Cabinet Defence Committee, 46th Meeting, 14 September 1948 [extract].

⁵⁷ DND Annual Report (1949), p. 16, and Table 4, p. 84, “Monthly Rates of Pay - Canadian Armed Forces - Effective October 1, 1948 - Officers”; and, Historical Statistics of Canada. Tables E69-77.

exception of Bill Lore, all were of British extraction. The policy of drafting sailors to the nearest coast (known as Home Port Divisions) did not officially extend to officers, but that in itself does not account for the exclusion of French-Canadians from *Crescent's* Wardroom. A survey of The Navy List for 1949, albeit of only the Executive Branch, reveals not even a dozen obviously French names: Bélanger, Benoit, Gauthier, Jetté, Lantier, Larose, Savard, Vanier and Vaillancourt.⁵⁸

The institutional impediments to French recruitment extended beyond the service's outward trappings of uniform, tactics and tradition all being patterned on those of the Royal Navy. They were compounded by the fact of government constriction of the naval budget over the course of most of the navy's history. Throughout the interwar period, a small establishment with insufficient ships and fleet schools to permit any meaningful RCN training in Canada, the inability to maintain a Canadian naval college, and the incapacity of Canadian industry to supply modern warships, all had conspired also to force the RCN to look to Britain and ensured that the Canadian naval service would remain an English-speaking environment.⁵⁹ Beginning during the war and continuing through the immediate postwar period, the efforts of the Naval Staff to establish a larger, balanced postwar fleet already were breaking down the barriers to a more representative national force. Wartime restrictions on recruiting for the permanent

⁵⁸ The Navy List, January 1949, pp. 60-71.

⁵⁹ Ernie Stanley Lightman, "The Economics of Military Manpower Supply in Canada." (University of California, Berkeley, unpublished PhD dissertation, 1972), pp. 123-128; and Jean Pariseau and Serge Bernier, French Canadians and Bilingualism in the Canadian Forces, Volume I, 1763-1969: The Fear of a Parallel Army (Ottawa: DND, 1988.), pp. 100-103, and 130-133.

force and postwar retrenchment had slowed the effort, but could not block its inevitability. By the fall of 1948, the limitations on manning levels were being eased, more ships were being commissioned and training was being conducted on a more regular basis. *Royal Roads* had evolved into one of the three tri-service Canadian Service Colleges, and plans were being made for a new class of modern warship to be built in Canada. Many of the pre-conditions for a more broadly based Canadian naval officer corps were poised to be met, even if their influence could not yet be felt in the fleet.

The whole question of race is put into finer perspective by the experience of Bill Lore with *Crescent's* Wardroom. On arriving on board as a "visible minority", unexpected and unannounced, he was ready for the reaction of the crew:

Of course, there was the inevitable quizzical look at me because, one and all, they must have been wondering why a strange Chinese Canadian Officer was put on board *Crescent* with no expressed duty to perform. ... I had the distinct feeling of being looked upon as an "outsider". That, of course, was not unexpected, because... I must have been the first Chinese Canadian naval officer they have ever seen, besides being the only reserve officer on board.⁶⁰

He was amazed at how quickly his fellow officers put him at his ease. The "Middies" remembered him from *Duke of York*, and George Wither "even gave up his lower bunk for me and slept on a bunk on top of cabinets."⁶¹ Later, when they had a chance to proceed ashore in Shanghai, Lore accompanied his wardroom mates to the British Club, only to find that "dogs and Chinese" still were not served in that establishment. The reaction of *Crescent's* officers was to promptly leave - but not before threatening to

⁶⁰ Lore. "The Crescent Episode," p. 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

“wreck the so and so bar”. Lore confesses in his memoir that “the solid and spontaneous support by fellow officers in the incident raised hope in me that I would be accepted as one of them, a member of Crescent’s company, a Canadian Naval Officer and, most of all, a Canadian regardless of being of the Chinese race.”⁶²

If *Crescent’s* Wardroom were putting into practice sentiments with regard to race somewhat ahead of those normally attributed to the RCN, there is evidence that they were not alone, and that perhaps the Navy was more advanced in its thinking than much of official Ottawa. It was common practise within NSHQ to circulate extracts of Cabinet Defence Committee (CDC) meetings amongst various concerned officers for information and further action as required. Although the pre-war policy restricting recruitment to candidates of the “white race” or “descendant of pure European stock” had been lifted officially during the war,⁶³ as late as May 1947 the Cabinet Defence Committee agreed “that in some cases it might be advisable to refuse applications for enlistment from Canadians of foreign racial origin.”⁶⁴ Upon circulation, this statement elicited an unusually strong response from the Naval Staff, including the unsigned re-statement of policy: “The [RCN] makes no distinction as to colour or racial origin provided applicants are British subjects and, in the case of ratings, have resided in Canada or Newfoundland

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶³ DHH, NHS 4000/100/14, PC 4950, 30 June 1944.

⁶⁴ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 1624, NSS 4600-1, Recruiting and Enrolment - General, volume 2, “Extract from the 34th Meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee, 28 May 1947.”

for two years...."⁶⁵ (Within a year, even the residency requirement for the entry of ratings would be lifted.) An additional handwritten minute by the Director of Naval Reserves (responsible for recruiting) stated simply that "each case would be treated on its own merits." The issue arose again in March 1950, when the Deputy Minister of Immigration and Citizenship forwarded an application for entry into the RCN originating from the British West Indies, which he covered with the official advisory that "Immigration policy has been and is to discourage any movement of coloured people to Canada." The Deputy Minister of National Defence minuted this on to the Director of Naval Reserves, with the comment that, "I think it might be unwise to encourage West Indians to come up to enlist." and the added observation that the RCN by then was over its recruiting and retention problems. Captain K.F. Adams took his cue, but had a point to make first. "It is understood we do not discriminate in race, colour or creed," he advised the deputy minister, noting that the general practise was to discourage applicants from the Caribbean region - like any other overseas recruit - by requiring them to make their own way to Canada. Finally conceding "[w]ith our present strength and complement we could very easily reply - 'no vacancies'," he drafted a polite letter from Bud Drury to Laval Fortier limited to that effect.⁶⁶

For all those rather liberal sentiments, the practical effect on the make-up of the general population of the RCN was effectively nil. The larger size of *Crescent's* lower

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, covering minutes.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Fortier to Drury, 21 March 1950; and, Drury to Fortier (draft with covering minute), 28 March 1950.

deck complement allows for some broader, if necessarily less personal, analysis.⁶⁷

Perhaps the first obvious point to make is that it was exclusively male. In that era, gender was not an issue. The Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS) had filled some 5900 wartime shore positions allowing men to serve at sea, and the RCN was only just beginning to reconsider bringing them back in a similar capacity to meet the present shortfall in strength.⁶⁸ Still, there was no question of women serving at sea. Aside from gender, youth was the distinguishing feature. Out of a crew of 187 ratings, the median age was 22½, the youngest sailor being 18½. Only four were older than 35 (including both senior rates, the Coxswain and the Chief Engine Room Artificer [Chief ERA]). This youthfulness extended also to the Wardroom, where only the Engineer, the Surgeon and the two Gunners were approaching 40; the captain himself was only 31. Nonetheless, the days of the pre-war enrolment of Boy Seamen had passed. Even when all three services were experiencing manning problems in the fall of 1947, and the Army and Air Force both advocated lowering the recruiting age to 17 to facilitate the entry of candidates from the cadet movement, the Navy insisted that the minimum age remain 17½, to ensure "segregation" (one presumes with respect to drinking age) at training establishments.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ The size of sample, method of analysis, and conditions of use of the personnel files were discussed in Chapter Two.

⁶⁸ NSS 1279-22, Complement Committee, A/CNP memorandum, 2 December 1948, identified some 739 positions for WRCNS, nearly half the then-existing personnel shortfall.

⁶⁹ NSS 4600-1, Naval Board Minute 228-1, "Age for Entry - Ratings," 8 October 1947 (extract); and, "Minutes of the 154th Meeting of the Personnel Members Committee," 9 October 1947.

As for ethnic origin (see **Figure 27**), the lower deck of the RCN remained overwhelmingly white, that is, of European extraction. Fully 145 (77.5%) claimed "British" ancestry, the next most common being Slavic

Ethnicity	Crescent		Canadian Population	
	#	%	#	%
British	145	77.54%	6709685	47.89%
French	6	3.21%	4319167	30.83%
Nordic	9	4.81%	326769	2.33%
Slav	16	8.56%	416447	2.97%
Med'n	3	1.60%	201827	1.44%
German	3	1.60%	619995	4.43%
Unknown	5	2.67%		
Other			1415539	10.10%
TOTAL	187	100.00%	14009429	100.00%

Figure 27: HMCS *Crescent*, Crew Ethnic Origin

(8.6%) and Nordic (4.8%). Only six members (3.2%) of the crew were French. With respect to religious denomination (see **Figure 28**), together Anglican, United and Presbyterian

constituted some 74% (corresponding roughly, but not exactly, to ethnic origin): twelve (6.4%) were Roman Catholic; the remainder comprised

Denomination	Crescent	%	Cdn Pop'n	%
Anglican	74	39.57%	2060720	14.61%
Baptist	9	4.81%	519585	3.68%
Evangelical	3	1.60%	50900	0.36%
Greek Orthodox	4	2.14%	172271	1.22%
Lutheran	6	3.21%	444923	3.15%
Mormon	3	1.60%	32888	0.23%
Pentecostal	1	0.53%	95131	0.67%
Presbyterian	13	6.95%	781747	5.54%
Roman Catholic	12	6.42%	6069496	43.04%
Salvation Army	1	0.53%	70275	0.50%
Ukr'n (Grk) Catholic	1	0.53%	190831	1.35%
United	52	27.81%	2867271	20.33%
Other		0.00%	365370	2.59%
No Religion	1	0.53%	59679	0.42%
Not Stated	7	3.74%	322017	2.28%
TOTAL	187	100.00%	14103104	100.00%

Figure 28: HMCS *Crescent*, Crew Religious Affiliation.

an ecumenical smattering of Baptist, Lutheran, Mormon and Greek Orthodox; only one claimed no affiliation (seven, or 3.7% were not stated or could not be determined).

A notable limitation on the sampling of the ethnic and religious categories is that in 1946 the RCN adopted a “drafting” or posting policy based upon Home Port divisions: that is, sailors serving in Halifax would be recruited in Eastern Canada or have a stated preference for serving there, while those in Esquimalt would be from Western Canada. *Crescent*, being in the Esquimalt Home Port Division, reflected this, in that all except eleven ratings (with another six unknown) were recruited from the Lakehead and points west (see **Figure 29**). The significant French

Roman Catholic population of Quebec as such is not reflected in a west coast ship (those claiming French ancestry were all from Manitoba and Saskatchewan), and likewise the black communities of Nova Scotia and southern Ontario are not

DIVISION	LOCATION	#
<i>Naden</i>	Esquimalt	29
<i>Malahat</i>	Victoria	9
<i>Discovery</i>	Vancouver	31
<i>Chatham</i>	Prince Rupert	1
<i>Nonsuch</i>	Edmonton	15
<i>Tecumseh</i>	Calgary	33
<i>Queen</i>	Regina	20
<i>Unicorn</i>	Saskatoon	7
<i>Chippawa</i>	Winnipeg	21
<i>Griffon</i>	Port Arthur	4
<i>Hunter</i>	Windsor	0
<i>Prevost</i>	London, Ontario	0
<i>Star</i>	Hamilton	2
<i>York</i>	Toronto	1
<i>Cataraqui</i>	Kingston	1
<i>Carleton</i>	Ottawa	2
<i>Donnacona</i>	Montreal	2
<i>Montcalm</i>	Quebec City	0
<i>Brunswicker</i>	St John	0
<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	Charlottetown	0
<i>Stadacona</i>	Halifax	2
<i>Scotian</i>	Halifax	0
<i>Niobe</i>	Great Britain	1
Unknown		6
	TOTAL	187

Figure 29: *Crescent* Recruiting Location.



Figure 30: HMCS *Iroquois*, #9 Mess (January 1954) (CFPU, PMR 98-132).

represented. Anecdotal evidence, such as the occasional photograph, attests to blacks in the postwar service (see **Figure 30**). Significantly, however, few orientals felt sufficiently comfortable in their adopted land to serve in its naval service, and, despite their proportionately higher representation in the West, none were borne in *Crescent*. Likewise, aboriginals do not appear to be represented, although certain of the French sailors may have been of Métis extraction. Only seventeen of the crew had been born outside of Canada (fifteen in Britain, one in Czechoslovakia, the other Latvia). Interestingly, of the 37 claiming ancestry other than British, only one had served prior to the war, further implying that the prewar lower deck, not unlike the officer corps, was not immune to Anglophilia, and that ethnic diversity was a byproduct of the wartime and postwar social upheaval.

Given the Western “bias” of the sample, not many other useful comparisons to the Canadian population can be made, except to observe a number of questions that remain unanswered. By adopting the Home Port Division system, was the navy inadvertently recruiting regional disparities into its east and west coast lower decks? There was nothing west of the Lakehead in 1949 to compare with the industrial might of Central Canada. It would be expected that Ontario should have provided a large number of recruits in east coast ships, simply by the sheer size of its population. But what was the actual level of participation of French-Canadians in the service? Certainly, the rural recruiting base of the prairies was balanced by the Maritimes. Given the semi-confederate status of Newfoundland through this period - citizens of that colony were allowed to join the RCN and other services as if they were Canadians - to what extent

were they represented in the navy? These are all subjects for further research, dependant upon discovery of a nominal roll of an east coast destroyer for comparative analysis.⁷⁰

This does, however, raise the matter of pay, a subject of constant concern to sailors, postwar and modern. The process of defining the peacetime pay rates was not a simple or a smooth one. Some 30 separate orders-in-council were required through the course of 1946 relating just to naval pay and allowances⁷¹ before, in October 1946, the RCN joined the other services in making the transition from a daily pay rate to a monthly, and their basic rates were harmonized.⁷² Some differences among branches of the navy remained, with continuing specialty pay for the technical trades. More to the point, although a variety of marriage, subsistence and kit up-keep allowances made direct comparison to civilian wages impracticable, this did not prevent the inevitable attempt from being made. Although an inter-service committee report in August 1947 “based on personal surveys of all industries in Ontario and Quebec... proved that Service pay (after considering all factors) was only slightly lower than civilian earnings”,⁷³ the perceived

⁷⁰ It is hoped that a nominal roll for either *Haida* or *Nootka* (the East Coast destroyers which were operational in early 1949) can be discovered to allow post-doctoral analysis for integration with this study of *Crescent*. A work which would be an invaluable starting reference for such an expanded study is Lightman, “The Economics of Military Manpower Supply in Canada,” *op. cit.*, although it relates primarily to a time span of 1962-69.

⁷¹ NAC, RG 2, vol 2842, Privy Council Register, 1946, pp. 96-97.

⁷² NAC, RG 2, vol 1952 (reel T-5192), PC 75/4118, 4 October 1946.

⁷³ NSS 4600-1, Director of Engineering Personnel to CNP, 26 February 1948. The report referred to by DEP supposedly was conducted “under the Chairmanship of Air Commodore MacKell”. Research for this dissertation could not uncover a copy of it.

failure of service rates of pay to keep pace with those available in civilian life was identified at about that same time as having a negative impact on morale in the navy.⁷⁴ In October 1947 and again late in 1948, additional pay raises were obtained, which must have proven satisfactory, because not one of *Crescent's* witnesses before the Mainguy Commission made a point to complain of pay in a general sense, other than in the special circumstances of marriage allowance, which will be discussed below. An appreciation of the progress in this regard

can be gleaned from a survey statement of the pay records of one of *Crescent's* sailors (#57) (see **Figure 31**).⁷⁵ This

Effective Date	Rank/ Rating	Basic Pay	Allowances	
			Subsist.	Marriage
Dec-45	Ord Smn	1.25/day	1.25/day	Nil
Jun-46	OS (6 mos.)	1.50/day	1.25/day	"
Oct-46	OS (6 mos.)	54.00/mo	45.00/mo	"
Mar-47	Able Smn	61.00/mo	45.00/mo	"
Oct-47	AB	69.00/mo	54.00/mo	20.00/mo
Oct-48	AB	79.00/mo	54.00/mo	30.00/mo
Feb-49	AB TrGrp I	83.00/mo	54.00/mo	30.00/mo

Figure 31: RCN OS-AB Rates of Pay and Allowances, 1945-1949.

man joined as a Seaman in December 1945 and by

early 1949 was still only an Able rate, Trade Group I (that is, he had completed no formal non-substantive training), although by then he was married. (Note that the February 1949

⁷⁴ NSS 4490-1, "Morale & Service Conditions - General", memorandum from Officer in Charge Seamen Personnel to DCNP, 11 August 1947, and file *passim*.

⁷⁵ Tables of the rates of pay in force in 1945 are be found in Regulations and Instructions for the Royal Canadian Navy (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1942 [with amendments to 1944]), Chapter XV. The 1946 rates were established by PC 75/4118, 4 October 1946, *op. cit.*. The pay rates for officers dating from October 1947 could not be found, but ratings' pay and allowances from that time are given in NSS 4600-1, *op. cit.*, "Enlistment - Royal Canadian Navy" [no author, no date - May 1948]. The rates effective 1 October 1948 are tabled in DND Annual Report (1949), p. 16 and Table 4, p. 83.

figures reflect a trade group re-organization undertaken that month, and the difference was back-dated to 1 July 1948.) Under the new (October 1948) rates of pay, the typical ordinary seaman could count on an annual wage of \$864, not much compared to the annual average of \$2,067 (1949

figures) earned by Canadian production workers, but acceptable considering junior rates living on board had very few other expenses, their rations and quarters being provided (see

Figure 32).⁷⁶ For those not living on board or in barracks (that is, “living ashore”), much of the



Figure 32: Messdeck Pay Parade on board HMCS *Antigonish*, c.1949. Seaman (in dungarees) watches Paymaster count out onto his cap, while Divisional Officer and Petty Officers witness (CFPU, PMR 98-133).

difference was made up by “subsistence” allowance, which after October 1948 was \$54 a month for ordinary and able ratings (\$648 a year).⁷⁷ Given that prior to joining the navy the majority of sailors were students or employed in the more typical Canadian service industries (which had 1949 average earnings of \$1,400), comparison to that sector is perhaps more appropriate. That basic rate could be approximated by a Petty Officer 2nd

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; and Historical Statistics of Canada, Tables E60-68.

⁷⁷ KRCN, art. 70.01, pertained to “subsistence allowance”, and described its application: “an officer or man for whom accommodation in public quarters is not available or who is not victualled, shall be paid an allowance in accordance with the conditions and at the rates prescribed in this [adjoining] table.”

Class (Trade Group II), at \$1,260, a rank it was possible to attain within 6-8 years of enrolment (although an exceptional case, sailor #169, recruited in February 1945, was promoted to this rank four years later, in February 1949); factor in a PO2's subsistence allowance of \$60 per month, and it made for a not uncomfortable relative existence. For the record, the highest non-commissioned wage earner was a chief petty officer, first class (Trade Group IV), at \$2,208 (plus subsistence allowance at \$70 per month).

Those who felt any financial pressures most were the married hands. Halifax especially, but Victoria also, was experiencing little respite from a wartime housing shortage which would continue into the 1950s,⁷⁸ and, although the Navy had begun the construction of married quarters with some 92 "temporary" units in Halifax, none would appear in Esquimalt until late 1950.⁷⁹ In short, if a married sailor could find a place for his family, it was likely to be expensive and sub-standard; it was just as unlikely that his wife would want or be able to find her own employment. So as to minimize the impact on family life of making do on only one reduced income, and of extended periods away from home by the husband-father, the Navy actively discouraged marriage by younger sailors. An additional allowance of \$30 per month (administered at the unit level and also increased, from \$20, in October 1948) was given to married ratings, but KRCNs stipulated that a sailor could not receive it until he had reached the age of 23 (25 in the

⁷⁸ Doug Owram, "Canadian Domesticity in the Postwar Era," in Neary and Granatstein (eds.), The Veterans' Charter, pp. 210-215.

⁷⁹ DND Annual Reports, 1950, pp. 26 and 91; and 1951, pp. 30 and 103.

case of officers).⁸⁰ (It should also be noted that subsistence allowance was only payable to sailors when they were not living on board. If they had permission to live ashore, their "subs" pay stopped when their ship deployed, and there was no compensating allowance for their families.) In *Crescent*, as of March 1949, there were 69 married ratings (marital status could not be determined for eighteen, the remainder were single). Interestingly, of these 69 men, 18 were under 23 years of age, yet only one (sailor #66) appears to have not been receiving marriage allowance. KRCNs allowed for persons of any age who had served during the war to receive the allowance, and this possibly accounts for two of the cases, although neither was married until well after the war (sailors #155 and #47, in August 1947 and September 1948, respectively). In every other instance except the one noted, the men had been recruited during the period late-1945 through 1946, when the wartime "emergency" was still deemed officially to exist, and the "wartime service" designation evidently was extended to them. Sailors are not prepared for the strict bureaucratic interpretation of regulations to act in their favour, and sailor #147, appearing before the Commission, asked for clarification on this point:

... there are so many different angles and stories about [marriage allowance], that you don't know whether you can get it or not. One person will tell you, you have to be twenty-three, and the next day someone nineteen will get married... and he gets it.⁸¹

Obviously taken aback but recovering quickly, a board member replied, "Well, definitely no one can get married until they are twenty-three." Within a month of this exchange, in

⁸⁰ KRCN art. 70.50(1).

⁸¹ "Testimony, *Crescent*," p.1597.

July 1949, sailor #147 got married, still only 21 years of age, and began to draw the allowance (he was recruited in 1948),⁸² within six months of their return from China in June 1949, this sequence was repeated by a further eight of his shipmates, all under age 23. Another, #124, questioned the very concept of a marriage allowance: “Why don’t they all get equal [pay], single or married men? ... [It] works out... a married man can save more than a single man....” The Board advised him flatly, “That is a matter of opinion.... there should be some difference in what a married man and a single man get.”⁸³

Having accepted the inherent validity of such an allowance, the explanation as to why its restrictions tended to be overlooked can only be that, contrary to the conventional image of an “uncaring” leadership, shipboard divisional and supply officers were deliberately confusing regulations so as to provide some relief to junior ratings in financial need. As noted earlier, in only one instance was the allowance apparently not provided to a married under-age rating. Sailor #66 had been recruited in October 1947, just after the minister had stood down the armed forces of Canada from active service.⁸⁴ In December 1948, he had married “realizing he would not be eligible for marriage

⁸² NAC. PRC, Personnel File Sailor #147, Marriage Allowance Certificate, 01 August 1949.

⁸³ “Testimony, *Crescent*,” pp. 1503-1504.

⁸⁴ NHS 4000-100/14, [Personnel] Policy, minute to file quoting “Speech (radio) of Mr Brooke Claxton” and DNInf press release 545 HQ, 30 September 1947.

allowance but considered that he could manage...”,⁸⁵ apparently on the strength of the recent pay raise. By the summer of 1949, however, he had reached the stage where “His retention in the Service is causing his wife hardship” and he put in a request for early discharge from the Navy to take up an offer of a higher paying civilian job (his five-year engagement would not be up until late-1952).

A review of the findings of sailor #66’s Discharge Board reveals a complicating factor to his financial distress. It seems that his preference was not so much a discharge from the service, but rather a branch transfer from Seaman to Electrician. He had made such a request twice previously, was recommended both times by his Divisional and Commanding Officers, and in fact was being employed on board *Crescent* as an Electrician’s Mate. His advancement in either branch, however, was being held up pending a decision by NSHQ on his transfer. Both times this was refused by the Ottawa headquarters. “because of a shortage of Seamen.”⁸⁶ By the summer of 1949, his financial straits had become a major factor in his new request for an early discharge. It was at about this time that his under-age shipmates began to get married and draw the allowance, even though they too had all been recruited after September 1947. Since the regulations restricting marriage would not be revised until 1953, one can only assume that the ship’s officers were, in their own way, correcting an apparent inequity in the system. From the tenor of the Discharge Board report, it is evident that they were sensitive to the plight of

⁸⁵ NAC. PRC, Personnel File Sailor #66, “Findings and Decision of Discharge Board,” 10 August 49.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

sailor #66, leading one to wonder why the allowance simply was not extended to him? Were they now using his financial difficulties to force a positive response on his early discharge? If so, it was an effective sentiment. The discharge was granted, and he was released that fall. Within two years, though, he had re-enlisted in the RCAF, where he put in the better part of a further two decades of service.

What was animating the thinking of staff officers in NSHQ, that, rather than grant an inter-branch transfer, they were willing to lose a man with good career prospects? The motivating factor was another variation of the complement problem. Even though throughout the years 1946-49 the RCN was well below the overall establishment figures, and hence desperate for new recruits, in fact the service was close to the required numbers in most of the technical trades.⁸⁷ Under the 75 per cent recruiting ceiling imposed in January 1947, even the new Electrician's Branch, made up of transfers from the Seaman and Engineering Branches, was very close to its authorized levels, and only "fully trained re-entries" could be accepted into its ranks.⁸⁸ Other branches were not in such a fortunate position. The smaller ones were particularly susceptible to any shortfalls. In September 1947, the officer in charge of the Supply & Secretariat Branch reported to the Chief of

⁸⁷ In truth, there also was some variation over the years within the technical trades. The Stoker Branch, in particular, suffered from fluctuating numbers, especially in the latter half of 1947. On Christmas Eve of 1947, the Director of Engineering Personnel (DEP) advised DNR "that there has been a further net loss of 11 from the Stoker Branch [in the last month] leaving the Branch 94 under complement," and requested that the freeze on Stoker recruiting be lifted (the same memo identified a continuing surplus in the ER Branch, especially in the senior rates). NAC, RG 24, Acc 83/84/167, box 1626, NSS 4600-3, DEP to DNR, 24 December 1947.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Naval Secretary to Divisions, 3 March 1947.

Naval Personnel that the number of Storemen, Stewards and Cooks actually borne across the service was some ten per cent below the 75 per cent reduced complement allowance (the trades were short 18, 14 and 25 men respectively), and while Writers showed some net stability, that was only because the excess of 14 men in the west coast Home Port Division neatly cancelled the 15 man shortage in the east.⁸⁹

Especially under-strength was the Seaman Branch. When NSHQ ordered an immediate freeze on recruiting in the wake of the 75 per cent complement ceiling, DNR very quickly had to backtrack, signalling to the Naval Divisions that there existed vacancies for 160 New Entry Ordinary Seamen and 30 radio operators.⁹⁰ Two years later, the situation had not improved. Discussing the nature of the incidents of early 1949, a commissioner put it to Admiral Grant that “invariably it was the Seaman’s Branch where the trouble started. The other branches seemed to be happy with their lot.”⁹¹ The problem, the commissioner suggested, was that “the ratings of the other branches were more satisfied with their divisional officers.” Admiral Grant allowed that there might be something to that, but the problem really ran deeper:

[The other branches] had more to occupy their minds from the technical point of view, and they are happier with conditions, getting better trade group pay. Any Canadian, of course, likes to get out on his own. I am not sure he likes regimentation, with brooms going up and down the deck [as the Seamen have to do]. ...

[At] the moment seamanship is one aspect of work on board a ship that has fallen into disrepute. I think it is a pity, because the seaman has

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, O-i-C Supply & Secretariat Personnel to ACNP, 19 September 1947.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, NSHQ/DNR signal, 171805Z/April/1947.

⁹¹ “Grant Testimony,” p. 3493.

been made to do all the manual work for the technical branches. That is being stopped, and the technical branches feel it is below their dignity to have to scrub up their own messes and so on, but they are being made to do that and quite rightly so.⁹²

He went on to conclude that, “I think that is probably the reason underlying the attitude of the Seamen. [that] and their fundamental upbringing at home. It has been pretty damn poor, particularly during the war years.” But more on that below.

A review of *Crescent*'s complement illustrates the scale of the manning problem in the Seaman Branch. The 187 ratings borne in the destroyer in March 1949 was a total close to that established by the Complement Committee, which had determined that the efficient running of that class of ship required a peacetime training complement of twelve officers and 193 ratings; however, it was considerably below the wartime establishment - which more realistically approximated the situation in which *Crescent* was to find herself in China - of fourteen officers and 243 ratings (see **Figure 22**). The most serious shortfall was in the Seaman Branch, below its peace and war establishments respectively by some 18 and 49 men. It could have been worse, were it not for the last-minute influx of 25 regular Seamen from HMCS *Ontario*, literally as that ship sailed for the Spring Cruise. The plight of the Seaman Branch is underscored by the fact that, even with the overall complement barely matching the peacetime establishment, the Engineering and Artificer Branches of the ship both were in excess of their authorized wartime strengths. *Crescent* was not in any way unique in this regard, for this general state of affairs was delaying,

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 3494-3495.

among others, the transfer out of the Seaman Branch by sailor #66. Evidently, the Navy was having trouble adjusting its shipboard complements.

* * *

On the voyage across the Pacific, Lieutenant-Commander David Groos had the opportunity to observe his new ship and her crew with no outside distractions. He was no stranger to command, having captained both a corvette and a destroyer in action during the war, and had proven himself to be an effective leader and a good judge of human nature. In a report written that February 1949, however, he confessed to a state of affairs "beyond the physical capacity of the Commanding Officer":

I think the most disheartening aspect of the present day Commanding Officer's duties is his continual struggle with mediocrity. ... By "mediocrity" I mean second rate quality in everything but intentions and it is said that the road to Hell is paved with those. ...

For the most part, the Officers [and the Chiefs and Petty Officers] are full of enthusiasm and keenness. Their enthusiasm however is somewhat nullified by reason of the fact that their knowledge of Naval matters, other than the strictly professional technical knowledge of their branch, is greatly limited. Principally though, they do not know what standards they should expect, having for their background only more mediocrity stemming back to the war years....⁹³

He forwarded this report to his friend, Louis Audette, upon learning that the latter had been named to the Mainguy Commission, and on the basis of "Having seen eye to eye with you on so many subjects during the Great War for Democracy and having spent a few late nights in 'bull session' with you over the very subjects with which we are now

⁹³ Audette Papers, [Groos] "Report from sea. Written on passage from Esquimalt to Shanghai in February, 1949."

concerned...”.⁹⁴ In his covering letter, Groos addressed what he felt to be the root of the problem with the present-day navy: “First of all, the average modern Canadian seaman is a pretty good sort of fellow who has led a comparatively sheltered life, unhampered by much discipline either at home during the war years or at school.”

This was a sentiment echoing those expressed by Admiral Grant and Ambassador Davis. Three independent opinions, albeit from the perspective of persons of relatively superior station, all pointing to the “soft life” of the younger generation as the root of all trouble. Was this merely a typical generational observation, or was there something more to it? What can the study of the make-up of *Crescent*’s complement add to our understanding of these impressions?

In light of the entirely laudable desire of the Navy to base its postwar establishment on a solid core of men with valuable experience from the recent war, a useful analysis can be made of when the ratings in *Crescent* enlisted, and under what terms (see **Figure 33**). In the broadest categories, of the 187 men, only 13 (6.95%) had pre-war RCN experience, 75 (40.11%) joined during the war (that is, before October 1945: entries up to that

ENLISTMENT TYPE	#	Sub-Total	%
Pre-war	13	13	6.95%
Wartime			
- RCN	30		
- RCNR Transfer	1		
- RN Transfer	1		
- RCNVR Transfer	13		
- RCNVR Interim Force	13		
- RCNVR Re-entry	17	75	40.11%
Postwar			
- RCNR Transfer	1		
- New Entry	93	94	50.27%
Unknown	5	5	2.67%
TOTAL	187	187	100.00%

Figure 33: *Crescent* Ratings Entry Scheme.

⁹⁴ *Ibid* , covering letter, Groos to Audette, 15 April 1949.

time had a reasonable expectation of going to war), and 94 (50.27%) enlisted in the postwar period. The longest serving of the pre-war RCNs had joined in 1932, while the bulk had enlisted within two years of the outbreak of war - not a great depth of experience, but arguably the best of the interwar period, in the heady days of rearmament and meaningful training exercises (see Chart II of Appendix

2). Further breakdown of the wartime enlistee total reveals that: 30 had joined the permanent force RCN directly, mostly within the first two years of the war; 13 transferred from the RCNVR into the permanent force at some point during the war; and another 13 were enticed into the permanent service by the Interim Force offer. Fully 17 VRs, however, had been demobilized but, not being able to make a go of it in civilian life for whatever reason, rejoined the Navy within a year or two. Of the postwar new entries, one-third had less than eighteen months in the service, and as such were still considered to be under basic training.

Again, this was a situation not unique to *Crescent*. On the eve of the Korean War, before the outbreak of that conflict precipitated another round of rapid expansion of the armed forces, the RCN finally was approaching the 10,000-man goal of the balanced force (see Appendix 2). In June 1950, the Chief of Naval Personnel undertook a review of the distribution by age and

Yrs Srvce	#	Age	#
<1	1013	17	75
1	1898	18	491
2	844	19	788
3	1016	20	838
4	1484	21	867
5	210	22	1105
6	91	23	690
7	57	24	392
8	183	25	309
9	366	26	301
10	181	27	282
11	103	28	267
12	153	29	284
13	112	30	279
14	47	31	218
15	21	32	170
16	18	33	105
17	14	34	99
18	9	35	72
19	36	36	47
20	32	37	65
21	11	38	50
22	0	39	29
23	1	40-42	57
24	1	43+	21
Total	7901		7901

Figure 34: RCN Rating Distribution by Years of Service and Age, June 1950.

years of service of the 7901 ratings in the RCN (see **Figure 34**).⁹⁵ In total, 4854 were 23 years of age or under, meaning they were 18 when the war had ended, and - short of the few who had lied about their age - could not have seen action. This is confirmed by the fact that 6255 of the men had less than five years of service in the navy.

It is impossible to properly assess, fifty years on, the effects on men recruited into the postwar RCN of having grown up in a household for want - or so it must be inferred from the comments of Grant, Davis and Groos - of the stern hand of fatherly discipline. There is, however, one irrefutable yardstick against which to measure the relative youth of the RCN. For a fighting force, the only real experience is war. Less than four years after the end of the recent global conflict, fully half of the ship's company - and over three-quarters of the entire navy - could not possibly claim any benefit from it.

With respect to the remainder, did *Crescent* enjoy the true fruits of hard-won experience? In hindsight, one must question even Groos's reported satisfaction with the technical abilities of his officers and men. The review earlier in this chapter of the careers of *Crescent*'s officers reveals a relatively modest amount of time at sea during the war for anyone except the captain. For most, *Crescent* was their first postwar appointment to a ship. Those fortunate enough to have had long specialist courses with the Royal Navy had not had the chance to consolidate this training with experience at sea with the RCN. In point of fact, the TAS officer and Gunners (all recent graduates of RN specialist schools) found themselves in *Crescent*, not to impart this technical knowledge, but to complete their own bridge watchkeeping qualifications.

⁹⁵ NSS 4600-3, "RCN Men by Years of Service," and "RCN Men by Age," 21 June 1950.

A full analysis of the state of training in the postwar RCN would sustain a separate dissertation. The review of the personnel files of *Crescent's* ship's company indicates that it was, at best, haphazard. Milner, Sarty, and lately Glover have demonstrated convincingly the lack of depth to wartime training and the detrimental impact this had upon the operational efficiency of the wartime Canadian navy, especially before 1944.⁹⁶ This problem was transferred to the postwar navy with the acceptance into its ranks, as officers and chiefs and petty officers, of the very men who had been recruited and trained during the early war years. Preparation of the database on *Crescent's* ratings revealed, for example, a disproportionate number of stokers and engine room artificers who had spent the war years either attached to shore establishments or at sea in corvettes and frigates - that is, without experience in a steam turbine-powered ship such as a fleet destroyer.

These sorts of limitations were recognized by NSHQ, and some attempt was made to correct them by embarking upon a rigorous training regime immediately upon proclamation of the Interim Force. In September 1945, the Director of Plans bluntly advised the Chief of Naval Personnel that "during the transitional period, training will be given special emphasis, so shore establishments will probably have to take priority over manning of fleets units." The Assistant CNP underscored this assessment with the comment. "The training service will be our most important function for the next five

⁹⁶ Milner, *The U-Boat Hunters*, pp. 256-264 and *passim*; Sarty, *Canada and the Battle of the Atlantic*, pp. 62, 98-100, 126-128, and *passim*; and Glover, "Officer Training and the Quest for Operational Efficiency," *passim*.

years.”⁹⁷ Again, some attempt was made to place the graduates of RN schools as instructors at the Canadian fleet schools, but this very often was too little, too late. The officer-in-charge of the postwar TAS School at *Stadacona*, Lieutenant (later Rear-Admiral) Robert Timbrell, had been one of the few permanent force officers to benefit from wartime specialist training and then actually been able to put this into operational practise. He found the combination of overwork at the school (he was the only qualified instructor) and uncertain promotion prospects (due to the influx of VR officers with comparable seniority) made the immediate postwar years the most depressing experience of his life, such that he seriously contemplated resigning his commission.⁹⁸ There also was a limit beyond which his theoretical classroom instruction could not cross. The large number of men requiring courses for their non-substantive advancement was exacerbated by the small number of operational ships in the fleet. Interspersed all too commonly throughout the personnel files of *Crescent*'s ratings are course reports such as that of sailor #15, issued on completion of a gunnery qualifying course: “As no firing ship is available at present all men passed have been rated Acting A.A. II's [anti-aircraft gunners, level II].... Confirmation to be dependent on firing experience. Firings should be carried out at the earliest opportunity.”⁹⁹ Indeed, the presence in *Crescent* of a high

⁹⁷ NSS 1650-26, vol I, DoP to CNP, 10 September 1945, with minute by ACNP, 11 September 1945.

⁹⁸ Interview with author, Rear-Admiral (ret'd) Robert W. Timbrell, Halifax, NS, 28 May 1998.

⁹⁹ NAC, PRU, pers file, sailor #15, O-i-C Gunnery Training Centre *Naden* to Commanding Officer HMCS *Naden*, 7 December 1948.

proportion of inexperienced ratings at all ranks and from all branches attests to her continuing role as a training ship. The problem remained that, with virtually everyone except the captain being partially trained or lacking practical experience in their appointment, there was no way of ensuring the maintenance of an adequate standard. Hence the mediocrity of which Groos complained.

It was this state of affairs which Admiral Grant was acknowledging when he admitted to the Mainguy Commission that “The right thing to do would [have been] to maintain the status quo after the war, had a very small navy, and started off with a proper training system.”¹⁰⁰ He pointed to yet another of its elements when he continued in the same breath. “[The officers we took in from the reserves] were not the best officers we took in by any means. I do not think it was too well handled. It was a rather sloppy method of bringing them in.” There was no way of preventing highly qualified “hostilities only” officers from returning to civilian occupations at the conclusion of the war, just as the insatiable demand for numbers to fuel even the fledgeling 10,000-man balanced force ordained the retention of all but the most incompetent. At least one of *Crescent*’s former VR officers had been refused a transfer to the RCN as “unsatisfactory” when he had first applied in 1944, but by late-1945 he faced no obstacles. To facilitate the integration of these VR officers of varying talents and abilities, the navy established Divisional Officers Courses - more colloquially styled as “finishing schools” - at the fleet schools on each coast, and then undertook to place them in shipboard billets.¹⁰¹ All of

¹⁰⁰ “Grant Testimony,” pp. 3467-3468.

¹⁰¹ Timbrell interview.

Crescent's former reserve officers had completed the month-long indoctrination prior to joining the ship (the courses were not required for the regular officers who had been exposed to a four year training regimen).¹⁰² While these courses were an opportunity to introduce the transferee to the finer social graces which the RCN expected of its officers, the stated aim was to teach them the fundamentals of their administrative responsibilities for their men's welfare. The courses met with such success on at least this latter point that they were extended (with modifications) to the Chiefs and Petty Officers, although it was not practical to do so in any comprehensive fashion. One of *Crescent's* senior Chiefs, a pre-war rating, observed:

I think conditions in naval service would be about a hundred per cent better if there were proper divisional courses [for Chiefs and Petty Officers]. I gained untold value from [the] divisional course [I attended]. I griped like hell when I knew I was going to take it, but I found that not only I, but everybody in the service, could gain untold value from such a course conducted on the basis it is. ... I may say it's the best six weeks I spent in the "Naden".¹⁰³

It is unfortunate that the realization of the need to extend the acculturation process to the non-commissioned ranks had not come sooner, or that when it did it was not more widespread. The weak training foundation of wartime enlistees was exacerbated by the perpetuation into the postwar navy at the critical senior rating level of what Bob Caldwell has styled a "VR culture" from the wartime navy. In groundbreaking research, Caldwell describes the process by which RCNVR ratings came to identify themselves:

¹⁰² Personal history forms, *passim*.

¹⁰³ "Testimony *Crescent*," p. 1886.

Due to the chronic drafting of sailors from ship to ship, which did not allow for cohesion within individual ships, the VRs tended to define themselves... by their exploits ashore, not by their exploits at sea. Thus the VR identity included young-men-at-war traits like hard drinking, acting tough, high-jinks ashore, ... and ironically, a "Them-Us" relationship to those not serving at sea. This final characteristic was reinforced by the apparent disinterest of NSHQ Ottawa towards improvements, afloat and ashore, for the ASW escort fleet.¹⁰⁴

These men now constituted the core of the senior ratings of the RCN, the proverbial "backbone of the fleet," responsible for the morale and discipline of the service. Barely older than the junior ratings, their ideas on these subjects were very different from their older pre-war peers and, more importantly, from their officers.

In its findings, the Mainguy Commissioners would make much of "the artificial difference between officers and men."¹⁰⁵ They painted the idyllic image of a navy in which "many officers and men came from the same kind of home, and spend their boyhoods in playing baseball in the same lot, ... and in playing 'hookey' from the same school." In point of fact, these men rarely went to school together. David Zimmerman has established that in the wartime navy, "By their social, cultural, and religious background, the officers, particularly those in the RCN, were already alienated from those they commanded."¹⁰⁶ The distinction was based primarily upon education, and consequently social status, the officers tending to be drawn from a middle class background. The education records of *Crescent's* sailors are incomplete, but the evidence

¹⁰⁴ Caldwell, "Morale and Discipline," pp. 133-134.

¹⁰⁵ The Mainguy Report, p. 32, and *passim*.

¹⁰⁶ Zimmerman, "The Social Background of the Wartime Navy," p. 278.

is that members of the lower deck were unlikely to have achieved junior matriculation, whereas the officers all had completed at least senior matriculation. The postwar manning crisis compounded this distinction. Just as the Cabinet Defence Committee was establishing university education as a fundamental pre-requisite for officers,¹⁰⁷ the Minister of National Defence already had announced that all three services had agreed to lower their educational standards for entry into most trades to the equivalent of grade X, and a good many more - including Seaman, Stoker and Cook - to grade IX.¹⁰⁸

Instead of recognizing education as the distinguishing characteristic between officers and ratings, critics accuse the former of feigning British upper class mannerisms: "mid-Atlantic" accents, a taste for finely tailored uniforms, and handkerchiefs up the sleeve. If these affectations had been acquired by certain Canadian permanent force midshipmen trained at an impressionable age in the Royal Navy, they also were aped by a good many reserve officers (who had never been in an RN establishment), so as to better fit into the country club atmosphere of a postwar RCN wardroom. "[T]he survival of distinctions in speech and social status, which are accepted with equanimity in some other countries",¹⁰⁹ indeed were inappropriate in the postwar Canadian naval service. These quirks came to symbolize everything that was wrong with the RCN officer corps, and served as a touchstone for any grievances the men might have. It has become another

¹⁰⁷ Cabinet Defence Committee, 46th Meeting, 14 September 1948 [extract], *op. cit.*

¹⁰⁸ NSS 4600-3, Armed Forces News Release 33-48, 25 May 1948; and, ACNP to CNP, "Educational Requirements for Entry," 26 May 1948.

¹⁰⁹ The Mainguy Report, p. 32.

tenet of Canadian naval mythology to blame the ills of the postwar navy on the presumption that the permanent force RCN officers were blatantly unapologetic Anglophiles. But were their British mannerisms also a manifestation of the confidence ingrained in naval officers over the course of their training with the RN? In his magisterial work on naval operational intelligence, Patrick Beesley offers the following characterization of Royal Naval officers, a description equally befitting their RCN peers:

He is a man of action and never at a loss. He must make up his mind on every occasion instantaneously and without a moment's notice. ... [I]n these characteristics lie his strength and his weakness. They make him the finest ships officer in the world, but... they *prevent him from realizing that there is any kind of work that he cannot do.*¹¹⁰

In this respect, were Canadian naval officers all that different from their nominal professional equivalents, the Ottawa civil service mandarinate? The preference for fine clothing and the withering condescension of such Oxford-educated luminaries in the Department of External Affairs as Hume Wrong are legendary. Arrogance - whether borne of competence or not - is insufferable whatever its guise. Perhaps "the Ottawa men" have escaped the denigration heaped upon the RCN simply because the former never had to interact with ordinary Canadians. What is more, the senior Canadian naval officers of the pre-war school recognized the inclination to pomposity within their ranks, and took steps to minimize it. The son of Vice-Admiral H.E. Reid, the first postwar Chief of the Naval Staff (February 1946 to September 1947) offers a telling recollection:

¹¹⁰ Patrick Beesley, Very Special Intelligence - The Story of the Admiralty's Operational Intelligence Centre, 1939-1945 (London, 1977), p. 6 [italics added by Beesley], quoted in Caldwell. "Morale and Discipline," pp. 11-12, fn.12.

He told me that the best thing he did as CNS was to arrange senior appointments and promotions in such a way that no “fake Englishmen” would be CNS for at least a generation. His generation certainly respected the RN and their professionalism since it had nurtured and developed them when Canada would not and the RCN could not. Nevertheless, his view may indicate much less pro-Brit feeling actually existed than seemed. (Of course, it is possible that “pro-tradition” and “pro-Brit” attitudes were not distinguishable until a later date.)¹¹¹

The distinction between officers and the most junior ratings was reinforced by the circumstances under which each group had entered the navy. Whether permanent force or Volunteer Reserve, virtually every officer serving in the Canadian fleet in 1949 had enrolled before the end of the Second World War (see **Figure 26**; the thirteen postwar officer new entries were all midshipmen then undergoing their training with the Royal Navy). Even *Crescent*'s fresh-faced sub-lieutenants had joined a fighting service with a reasonable expectation of seeing action. In contrast, practically to a man, all leading hands and below had joined the RCN after the defeat of Japan. Most had enlisted straight out of school, without any other job prospects. Already they were disaffected with the wartime generation, who dismissed their youngers as a spoiled generation, and yet, as they demobilized, were laying claim to all the prime employment opportunities. The challenge to the postwar RCN was to recognize the differences between the officer corps and the ratings, and to reconcile any grievances which these might engender.

* * *

¹¹¹ DHH. Admiral H.E. Reid BIOG file, Ian Reid to Tony German (copy provided to DHH). 27 March 1991. I am indebted to Michael Whitby for bringing this document to my attention.

Much of what we have wrong about the whole issue of the Canadian identity of the RCN ironically is a legacy of the Mainguy Commission. Among the “General Causes Contributing to [the] Breakdown of Discipline” in the Canadian fleet in 1949, the Mainguy Commission was to pay special attention to the “Absence of Canadian Identification... [and] Traditions in [the] Navy.” There was, they claimed,

...amongst the men a very real and almost universal opinion that the Canadian Navy was not sufficiently Canadian. ... While in general the officers of the Canadian Navy were satisfied with their uniforms and the lack of Canadian identification thereon, the men were vehement in their demands that they be identified as Canadians. ... [A]n opinion is widely held amongst many ratings and some officers that the “Nelson tradition” is overdone, and that there is still too great an attempt to make the Canadian Navy a pallid imitation and reflection of the British Navy.¹¹²

In announcing this “very real and almost universal opinion”, the commissioners were being more than a little disingenuous. A thorough reading of the testimony reveals that, when queried as to the nature of their complaints, very few of the witnesses offered up this yearning for identity. They were, however, quick to agree to the idea once it was proffered by a commissioner. Discussion of the matter came most frequently at the end of an interview, generally in response to the query, “Have you anything else to suggest to better the Navy?” After a recitation of such subsidiary matters as ill-fitting regulation-issued uniforms, over-crowding of messes, and the like, “distinguishing identity” might arise as an after-thought. Just as many sailors raised the subject of marriage allowance and of insufficient hands to do sentry and other menial work, neither of which figure in

¹¹² The Mainguy Report, pp. 33.

the Commission report. Evidently, "identity" was not as fundamental a concern to *Crescent's* sailors as it was to the commissioners.

Again, the response of *Crescent's* ratings was not unique. When the commission began hearing testimony from the crew of HMCS *Athabaskan* on 4 May 1949, the subject of a distinguishing Canadian identity did not arise until the end of the interview of the twelfth witness,¹¹³ and that exchange set the pattern for practically every other discussion of the matter:

Q - Is there anything else? You spoke about your civilian clothes and about the dungarees. Is there anything else?

A - That's about all.

Q - You think that's all?

A - Yes.

Q - That's the main things, is it?

A - Yes.

Q - Does anybody play the piano on the mess deck?

A - Yes, quite a few of them.

Q - Do you feel that anything could be done to make the RCN more Canadian? Do you feel you have enough distinguishing marks?

A - You meet an American and they don't mind a Canadian, but they do not want anything to do with you because they think you are British and they don't want anything to do with "kippers".

Q - That's British?

A - Yes. The only way that people would know we are Canadian is by that "C" on the hat, and half the people don't stop to look at that. They see the uniform and think that we are British, and a couple of times I thought a guy was going to jump across the bar and pound me because he didn't like my uniform. I don't know any reason at all why we cannot wear Canadian badges.

Q - And do you think that all the men would like to have Canadian badges?

A - Yes sir, I think they would.

Q - They would prefer that to the maple leaf, or some other thing that is Canadian?

¹¹³ Audette papers, vol 13-9, "Testimony, *Athabaskan*," pp. 250-252 [witness described by Audette, "Very articulate, probably all-right, though I'm dubious"].

- A - I don't know.
- Q - Is the "Canada" badge about the best idea?
- A - I think that's about the best. A lot of people down there don't know our flag, whether it is the white ensign or the jack [the blue ensign]. They just say that's another British ship coming in.
- Q - The jack you wear is the Canadian jack?
- A - Yes sir, it's Canadian.
- Q - As you go around on these cruises, and they are more frequent, more people will get to know you as the Canadian Navy?
- A - Yes sir.
- Q - In many of these places the Canadian ships went there for the first time?
- A - Yes sir.
- Q - Have you the maple leaf painted on your funnel?
- A - No, there isn't.
- Q - Is there a maple leaf painted on any funnel?
- A - On all the funnels during the war. They are known to the Americans.
- Q - There is none on the "Athabaskan"?
- A - No.
- Q - You say you don't take the rum?
- A - No, I don't draw rum.
- [Interview ends]

"They see the uniform and think that we are British." "A lot of people down there don't know our flag, whether it is the white ensign or the jack." From this exchange, it is just as evident that "Canada" on a uniform shoulder flash would be no more effective than the Blue Ensign as a distinguishing Canadian mark. While the commissioners allowed that "The only other alternative [to Canada badges] would appear to be the design, issue, and wearing of a distinctive Canadian uniform", they recognized that none of the sailors were interested in changing the style of their cherished "tiddly rig".¹¹⁴ No one suggested designing a new Canadian flag.

¹¹⁴ The Mainguv Report, p. 53.

Nor did the commissioners give any play to dissenting opinions. The older and more experienced sailors, it seemed, officers and ratings alike, and especially among the pre-war generation, were entirely comfortable with their lack of distinguishing identity. Did this make them any less “Canadian”? We do not have the precise opinion of David Groos on the matter, because when a commissioner embarked on that line of thought by challenging him over *Crescent*’s black gun barrels, Groos seized the opportunity to set the matter straight:

- Q - There is one other point, about painting the guns black. ... Can you tell us what it is all about?
- A - ... It is just a bit of “fancy waistcoat” which is an expression you all know. I can’t see why it was mentioned by anyone.
- Q - Because it was copying the RN it was mentioned by several, and some of the men resented it very much. ...
- A - The gunners operating these came along and said “Those guns over there look nice. They look much longer when black. Do you think we could paint ours black, just for entering Esquimalt Harbour?” I said I thought it could be done. I thought it looked very nice. ... It is hard to explain. You have a hundred and eighty men and you can’t please them all. ... They were kept our colour so we would remain looking Canadian all the time we were out there. They were painted at Pearl Harbor on the way back. They have been painted for ten days.¹¹⁵

That was the end of the matter for him. Later, a provocation by one of the commissioners led to this infamously acrimonious exchange with the Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Harold Grant:

- Q There is one thing which is pretty generally wanted amongst the petty officers and below, and that is Canada badges.
- A Of course, I cannot see how any person serving at sea today dare put up the word “Canada” until he is fit or shown himself fit to man a ship and take the responsibility.... Still, I think anything that

¹¹⁵ “Testimony, *Crescent*,” pp. 1998-2000.

is going to help the old esprit de corps is very essential. We have approved a distinguishing badge here. It is a maple leaf, which I think is pretty good.... I certainly would never wear "Canada" myself on my uniform... [and] I think it spoils a sailor's uniform too. These young fellows like to go around strutting themselves with "we won the war, we are quite something", but they are not something and until they prove that they are something I don't believe in giving them any advertisement at all....

Q Suppose the result of the absence of a flash does three things, robs the American sailors of enlightenment, causes a sense of inferiority to the Canadian sailors, and inspires some subtle resentment against British sailors.... [We] have had overwhelming evidence that Canadian sailors were called limeys, kippers and that they used to have fights.... The complaint was almost universal from the men and almost never from the officers....

A ... If it is going to help his morale by all means give him [a distinguishing badge]....

Q Do you think it is merely vanity that is causing them to want the word "Canada" on their uniforms?

A I think it looks like hell on any officer. I refused to wear it consistently [during the war] myself, not because I was not quite pleased to fight under the Canadian flag or any nonsense about trying to wear the RN uniform. I think it ruins the uniform.

Q If it did destroy perhaps some of the aesthetic value of the uniform but contributed to morale, would it not be worth the sacrifice of artistic value?

A ... The order has already gone out for the other, the maple leaf, to put it up and we shall see how they like that. If they do not like it and still want to put "Canada" on, we will take the maple leaf off and put "Canada" on the seat of their pants.

Q It may be possible to use both.

A I think Canada makes enough damn noise in this world without doing anything about it.

Q That is a view shared only by the senior officers and the [senior ratings] as well.... All junior personnel seem to be against it.

A They want their name across their backs.

Q No, they want small Canada flashes on their shoulders as they had in the war. The objection to the maple leaf is this. Because of the state of ignorance of the American navy concerning other navies, they might mistake the Canadian maple leaf for a British rhubarb, since they mistake the Canadian soldier for the British one. I must admit the whole thing has been more of a reflection on our

- American friends than anything else. Do you know what the practice of the other two branches of our forces is on that subject?
- A Some wear them and some do not. They are not supposed to wear them in the RCAF so far as I know. Some Canadian regiments have Canada on the uniform.
- Q [The problem is that] one case is static in Canada and the other is continually cruising in foreign ports where incidents occur.
- A ... If morale of the troops is suffering as you say, then by pasting this thing on the shoulders you are going to have better men, perhaps we should do it, but I still have to be convinced that they would be better men as a result. What they want is a damn good kick in the seat of the pants in the training period and told that Canadians aren't at the head of the list and not to go around advertising it.¹¹⁶

Grant's outburst, unfortunate in certain respects, is incredibly nuanced in others. Setting it against the circumstances surrounding *Crescent's* recent despatch to the Far East on an apparent governmental whim, and more importantly her ignominious recall, opens the exchange to a whole new context.¹¹⁷

* * *

Did the Mainguy Commissioners truly understand the nature of the phenomenon which they were attempting to describe? The not unrelated problems of complement, and of trying to integrate previously established cultures, were the two dominant factors determining the shape of the postwar RCN. At a certain level, the Commissioners sensed these influences and the structural limitations they brought to the service. Laden with meaning to contemporary readers, but generally under-appreciated by modern eyes, was an introductory paragraph in The Mainguy Report with "Some General Observations":

¹¹⁶ "Grant Testimony," pp. 3497-3500.

¹¹⁷ Audette. "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report," p. 247, styled Grant's reference, "an intriguingly irrelevant criticism of his own country."

The times in which we live, like all postwar times, are full of restlessness, uncertainty and change.... The social and economic uncertainties and changes, ...and the general deterioration in the discipline of family life, which is one of the misfortunes of our times, press with particular intensity on the lives of young men.... In our Navy there is a mingling of men of old traditions, of new traditions and of no traditions. Our ship's crews are a mixture compounded of the Royal Canadian Navy with many years of training in peace and in war; of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, who gained all their experience in the grim, swift and exciting days of war; and of men who during the years of peace with little training at sea or on shore have, from motives that vary from patriotism and love of adventure to the stark necessity of earning a living, joined the Naval Defences of the country.¹¹⁸

The commission was recognizing the diverse make-up of the postwar RCN, while at the same time downplaying the importance of its constituent parts. These important contextual pre-conditions struck to the very identity of Canada's postwar navy. Without further exploration, however, they served to hide as much as they exposed of the character of the RCN.

This was not the extent of the commissioners' looseness of interpretation. The very next "general observation" noted how "[t]hese Defences have grown and shrunk in a manner unparalleled" from a pre-war total strength of only 1585 officers and men, to a wartime peak of over 93,000, and back down to the 1949 total of 8800. To this, the Commissioners concluded, "Such growth and reduction need no verbal comment. Every such process must have its accompanying stresses and pains."¹¹⁹ However glaring the extremes of these numbers, a quick recitation again served to make light of the situation of the postwar RCN. Canada's naval service had not merely down-sized to a strength of

¹¹⁸ The Mainguy Report, pp. 7-8.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

8800, it had had to claw its way back up to that level from a low of fewer than 5000 all-ranks. Even by the time of the inquiry, the RCN was still short of its supposedly modest goal of 10,000 men. To ignore that fact, and then to dismiss it without further comment, was to fail to appreciate the scale of the problem confronting the postwar Naval Staff. The Mainguy Commission was setting itself up for a fundamental misreading of those "accompanying stresses and strains."

Chapter 6: The Canadian Experience of Mutiny

“The men won’t come out, sir!”

Captains of Canadian warships were only too familiar with this fateful phrase, or words to that effect, long before the incidents of the late winter of 1949. There was a history of mass protest in the RCN reaching back at least to the mid-1930s, with some dozen recorded instances in as many years, from 1936 to 1947. The chronology may begin even earlier (archival and anecdotal records of the inter-war years are sparse), and may yet be open to many more entries never registered, for prior to the Mainguy Commission in 1949, only two of the incidents were the subjects of official Boards of Inquiry (those in *Iroquois*, in 1943, and *Rivière-du-Loup*, in 1945). In the official history of the RCN, Tucker allows that “There were three episodes [of open disaffection aboard a Canadian warship] during the war”, but provides neither names nor cap-tallies.¹ The silence extends from an understandable inclination to avoid personal or service embarrassment. Moreover, because the incidents invariably were confined to individual ships, and only once did a protest involve a hint of violence, they tended to be treated in isolation. They would be handled quietly, often within the ship, would rarely reach the ears of higher authorities, and never were reported officially to NSHQ - until the proverbial straw broke the camel’s back in the summer of 1947.

¹ Tucker, Volume II, pp. 328-329. He devotes less than one long paragraph to discussion of these incidents. Coming in the midst of a mundane discourse on morale, it is easily overlooked.

Still, the latent existence of this form of activity was known throughout the fleet, as evident from the comment of David Groos - having just experienced his second portion of it - to Louis Audette in April 1949:

Trouble? Did someone say "Trouble"? In the RCN? There's never been any trouble in the RCN if you go about it the right way. All you have to do is get a few friends in to help and you're a cinch. Nothing ever happened to the boys in the old *Skeena* days did they [sic]? Or the *Haida*? Or the *Nabob*? Or the *Ontario*, the *Micmac* or the *Athabaskan*, *Crescent*, *Magnificent*? And there were others.²

He gave no dates, certain of the specific names are wrong (for *Haida* it should be *Iroquois*), and he could have added his own previous spot of "trouble" in *Restigouche*, but Groos's point is nonetheless valid. The spontaneous incident in *Crescent* on 15 March 1949 had a long line of precedents. But were there any links?

* * *

What constitutes a mutiny? *The Naval Service Act (1944)* evidently held the term to be self-explanatory, specifying only that "the ringleader or ringleaders of the mutiny shall suffer death, or such lesser punishment...; and all other persons who join in such mutiny, or do not use their utmost exertions to suppress it, shall suffer imprisonment... or such lesser punishment...".³ Canadian Naval Regulations guardedly avoided use of the word altogether, preferring instead the euphemism "mass statement of grievance," and prescribing such action under the terms of "Improper Criticism."⁴ Anyone suffering a

² Groos to Audette, 15 April 1949, *op. cit.*

³ KRCNs, Appendix I, *The Naval Service Act, 1944*, art. 57.

⁴ The Mainguy Report, pp. 27-29, reproduces the relevant sections of KRCNs, chapter 12. Although KRCNs were not codified until 1945, their wartime antecedents were not

complaint was directed to “seek redress as an individual and not in combination with any other person”; and more specifically, “Persons in the Naval Forces shall not combine for the purpose of bringing about alterations in existing regulations or customs of the Naval Service.” The well-established procedure for a man to seek redress of a grievance was by passing it up the chain of command through the Divisional system. Alternatively, persons of any rank could submit “Suggestions for the Improvement of the Naval Service” directly to the Naval Secretary, although, as the commissioners observed, this procedure might be intimidating to an ordinary seaman, and.

In any event, for one man to complain of the food or of the conduct of an officer, or of some individual unfairness, could not be very well interpreted as a statement of general dissatisfaction. Many men therefore felt, however wrongly, that the only method likely to be successful was the illegal and mutinous procedure on which they ultimately decided.⁵

The relatively benign fashion in which Canadian naval protest found expression hardly fits the image popularized by the mutiny in the *Bounty*. The scenes of large groups of men spontaneously locking themselves into stuffy mess decks, without any supply of food or water, much more closely resemble impulsive sit-down strikes. Recent scholarship has firmly placed the Canadian incidents of 1949 in what can be described as “the British naval social tradition” of mutiny, tracing its lineage back to the famous episodes of fleetwide revolt in the Royal Navy at Spithead and the Nore (1797),⁶ and

significantly different in letter or intent.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶ Allan D. English, “The Naval Mutinies of 1797” (paper prepared for History 853, Queen's University, April 1988, and kindly supplied to this author).

more recently at Invergordon (1932).⁷ This tradition holds that “mutinous acts remain fundamentally loyal to the *status quo* of the service, challenging not social or political systems, but rather demanding conditions of service promised by those systems.”⁸ The leading analyst of the social aspects of British sea power, Nick Rodgers, has observed that mutinies involving “the violent seizure of a ship from her officers, on the high seas... [which] may be said to belong to the Cecil B. de Mille school of history... were virtually unknown in the Navy.” Instead, “collective actions by whole ship’s companies... did happen, and happened quite frequently.”⁹ They performed a vital function in naval life:

When other methods failed, mutiny provided a formal system of public protest to bring grievances to the notice of authority. It was a sort of safety-valve, harmless, indeed useful, so long as it was not abused. It was part of a system of social relations which provided an effective working compromise between the demands of necessity and humanity, a means of reconciling the Navy’s need of obedience and efficiency with the individual’s grievances. It was a means of safeguarding the essential stability of shipboard society, not of destroying it.¹⁰

* * *

⁷ Christopher M. Bell, “The Royal Navy and the Lessons of Invergordon” (paper presented to the Conference of the Canadian Nautical Research Society, University of Calgary, 25 June 1998, and kindly supplied to the author).

⁸ Archambault, “The Canadian Naval Mutinies of 1949,” p. ii.

⁹ Rodgers, The Wooden World, pp. 237-238.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 243-244. This quote has been used to good effect by other students of Canadian naval disobedience, notably Whitby, “The *Iroquois* Mutiny,” p. 32, and Caldwell, “Morale and Discipline,” p. 81. Archambault, p. 64, cites Rodgers’s study of mutiny as suggesting that after the Seven Years’ War mutiny took on more of a “class struggle” appearance. That is not the reading of this author; however, it is certainly the interpretation of British labour historian, Anthony Carew, The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 1900-39: Invergordon in Perspective (Manchester University Press, 1981), which Bell, “The Lessons of Invergordon,” *op. cit.*, does much to overturn.

There has never been any systematic attempt to trace the history of mass protest in the Royal Canadian Navy, or to analyse over time its causes and effects.¹¹ In addition to Archambault's look into the incidents of 1949, however, there is a growing body of secondary works examining individual incidents, and there remains an untapped wealth of primary evidence for those fortunate enough to stumble across. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide an in-depth analysis of the subject, a brief survey of the known incidents establishes the scope of the Canadian experience of mutiny.¹²

The earliest recorded episode of mass disobedience in the RCN was in the destroyer *Skeena*, in January 1936. It occurred alongside in Acapulco, and was precipitated when the captain delayed the expected adoption of a tropical work routine (beginning at dawn and ending by noon). Upon learning the men would refuse to resume work in the afternoon, the Executive Officer entered their barricaded mess deck and

¹¹ In this, Canadian naval scholars are not alone. There are no studies examining the extent or nature of mass protest in either the USN or RN during the Second World War, although it begs credulity that navies of such vast scale would not have suffered from it. The best known account is Herman Wouk's fictional, *The Caine Mutiny* (New York: Doubleday, 1951), set in 1943-44. It is atypical of the British social tradition of mutiny, in that it describes a revolt of the officers against the captain, not unlike the factual yet equally mythologized mutiny in the *Bounty*. A more real assessment is provided by the Commodore(D) at Londonderry (Simpson to Audette, *op. cit.*), who notes that his Command "was a strenuous one.... [D]uring my last six months, the Boards of Inquiry averaged four a week, the majority of which were to investigate a lack of discipline and recommend means to maintain it." That he recalls only four incidents involving Canadian ships, and that three of them fell outside this time frame, is a sobering reflection on the scale of the problem in the British fleet.

¹² A longer discussion from which this account is drawn is a paper by this author, "What *The Mainguy Report* Never Told Us: The Royal Canadian Navy's Experience of Mutiny Before 1949," to be given to the Annual Conference of the Canadian Nautical Research Society, Corner Brook, Nfld, August 1999 (possibility of publication in *The Northern Mariner*).

promised to intervene with the captain on their behalf, which he did, with success.¹³ That this was a far from uncommon occurrence and resolution in the inter-war RCN is confirmed by a messdeck lock-in which Ralph Hennessy remembers taking place in *Assiniboine*, in the late-spring or summer of 1940, and certainly before the full-scale expansion of the wartime RCN (that is, the officers and crew were still all pre-war permanent force). If the details have become lost in the subsequent turmoil of the war, the young sub-lieutenant was struck with astonishment at the relative acceptance by the other officers of the incident, and the handling of it as an internal event.¹⁴

Despite anecdotal accounts of the Corvette Navy that “Indiscipline was chronic, drunken captains, useless officers, mutinous crews were commonplace”,¹⁵ the breakdown of discipline was never epidemic in the wartime navy. Bob Caldwell relates these examples instead as symptoms of a developing VR culture, and part of the process by which the infusion of large numbers of Volunteer Reservists transformed the RCN into a “people’s navy”.¹⁶ As noted previously, Tucker devotes barely a paragraph to the acknowledgement of three wartime incidents, which he describes as “sit-down strikes”

¹³ Lay, *Memoirs of a Mariner*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁴ Interview Hennessy, 25 February 1999. Neither was it restricted to the RCN. The inter-war experience of mass protest in the Royal Australian Navy has received more rigorous analysis, and while many of the pre-conditions in that fleet were different (especially the fact of the presence in the fleet of a high proportion of British officers), it is nonetheless instructive. See, Kathryn Spurling, “Life and Unrest in the Lower Deck of the RAN in the 1930s,” in the *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute* (January/March 1997), pp. 41-48.

¹⁵ Lamb, *The Corvette Navy*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁶ Caldwell, “Morale and Discipline,” p. 6 and *passim*.

and attributes simply to “the leadership abilities of ships’ officers.”¹⁷ Through the efforts of Michael Whitby, the details of the first and last of these are now known. The *Tribal*-class destroyer *Iroquois* was struck on 19 July 1943, on returning from a Gibraltar convoy, when the captain (an older, pre-war officer with a harsh leadership style) cancelled leave until a distinguishing crest stolen from a German prisoner was returned.¹⁸ On 10 January 1945, when the crew of the corvette *Rivière-du-Loup* learned that the captain had taken ill and the Executive Officer (in whose professional competence they already had lost confidence) was designated to take the ship to sea, they demanded his removal.¹⁹ Less is known of Tucker’s middle incident, although Archambault identifies it, if only in passing, as being in the corvette *Chebogue* in July 1944.²⁰ Other incidents have come to light. Caldwell describes one in the armed yacht HMCS *Reindeer*, in late November, 1942, in Sydney, Nova Scotia, when the crew used the pretext of lack of shore leave to express their concern over the growing instability of their captain, also a VR.²¹ The postwar correspondence of the Royal Naval Commodore(D) in Londonderry unveiled Groos’s own experience in *Restigouche* in January 1944 (which erupted when

¹⁷ Tucker, Vol II, pp. 328-329.

¹⁸ Whitby, “The *Iroquois* Mutiny,” *op. cit.*

¹⁹ Bill McAndrew, Bill Rawling and Michael Whitby, Liberation: The Canadians in Europe (Montréal: Art Global, 1995), pp. 111-112.

²⁰ Archambault, p. 62. This is probably the incident recounted by Simpson: “I cannot recall the reason except that it was not due to personalities but to routine. I also recall that the pretext was frivolous” (Simpson to Audette, *op. cit.*).

²¹ Caldwell, “Morale and Discipline,” pp. 55-56.

the Reservist doctor carelessly left a carton of cigarettes in the seaboard, and then made allegations of theft), as well as another in a corvette, the identity of which it has not been possible to establish.²² The one other known instance of mass protest in the wartime RCN occurred in HMS *Nabob*, a Royal Navy escort carrier with a Fleet Air Arm squadron embarked and British Merchant Service personnel in the Engine Room, but otherwise manned by Canadians. Disparities between Canadian and British rates of pay and victualling scale (the RCN was better in both respects) precipitated first a brief lock-in and then a large number of desertions. The captain (H.N. Lay, a nephew of Prime Minister Mackenzie King) had reported the sub-standard living conditions to the Admiralty, and was able to use these incidents to advantage in extracting concessions.²³

Each of the above incidents were characterized by an actual or threatened lock-in, a form of action entirely consistent with "the safety-valve" analogy used by Rodgers to describe mutiny in the Georgian navy. In the mid-twentieth century RCN, these were similarly spontaneous displays, precipitated by some local event, and undertaken with a view to attracting the attention of immediately superior officers to a problem the sailors believed was within their power to correct. The precise cause for protest varied. Most commonly it was over working conditions (*Skeena*), less frequently it was over issues of welfare specific to the ship (such as food and pay in *Nabob*), and occasionally it was in reaction to the intemperate actions of officers, whether permanent force or reservists.

²² Simpson to Audette, 21 June 1950, *op. cit.* Not unlike Tucker, Simpson did not identify any of his subjects by name.

²³ Lay, *Memoirs of a Mariner*, p. 157-159.

Only once was the sailors' aim the removal of the commanding officer (in *Iroquois*, where that officer was clearly the problem), and on only one other occasion did the crew refuse to sail (and then because *Rivière du Loup's* Executive Officer - the problem - was the commanding officer-designate). This latter case apparently was also the only occasion that any ringleaders were identified and jailed. Invariably, large numbers of a ship's company had joined together to give voice to some collective complaint for which there was no other officially sanctioned form of expression, and, if the cause was not extravagant, they were able to do so with little fear of retribution. Just as significantly, the almost workmanlike resolution of such displays by senior officers indicates a certain familiarity. Given the chance circumstances of how these incidents were discovered by researchers, it is quite plausible that the practice was more widespread than can ever be accurately determined.

At the same time, historians have failed to notice one other expression of massed protest which was evolving in the RCN: desertion. Once again, Nick Rodgers has usefully established the long tradition of the practise in "British" navies, and many of its elements resonate with the Canadian naval experience. Noting a distinction between "stragglers" (that is, those sailors simply late on returning from leave) and genuine deserters, he observes that many of those who chose to "run" did so "on the spur of the moment, perhaps with no very coherent motives."²⁴ Upon re-thinking their position, they frequently returned to their ships. If Rodgers was unable to come to any conclusions with

²⁴ Rodgers, The Wooden World, p. 199.

respect to the true deserters, other than that “the most obvious temptation to leave... was undoubtedly money”,²⁵ he does note “one very striking fact”:

...that the propensity to run was in inverse proportion to time in the ship. The vast majority of men who ran did so soon after they had joined their ships. More than half ran in their first six months aboard.... By the time a man had been in the ship eighteen months, the chances of his running were negligible. ... This supports the other evidence which all points to the importance of the ship’s company as the basic social unit of the Navy.²⁶

RCN wartime records on desertion do not appear to have been preserved, but some measure of its prevalence and nature can be gleaned from an April 1946 report to the RCMP of “Naval personnel who... are in a state of desertion and have not yet been apprehended.”²⁷ Aside from six who had deserted in 1946 (and another six for whom no date is given), there are only 158 cases provided on the nominal list. Postwar records indicate a “recovery” rate of 60 per cent. Even assuming this rate was probably higher in wartime, the surprisingly small number indicates desertion was not a problem threatening to undermine the Canadian naval war effort. There are significant limitations on the use of statistics based only on “unrecovered” deserters.²⁸ It is nonetheless valid to observe a

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

²⁷ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 1474, NSS 4260-1, Naval Secretary to RCMP Commissioner, 26 April 1946. The data from this nominal list was used by the author to establish a database program from which the statistics referred to hereunder are derived.

²⁸ Primarily, as already noted, they give no indication of the overall rate. In addition, it is possible that some units were more lax in hunting down those who had “run”, just as it might be that policing improved through the war. A number of questions arise, such as: were certain groups or classes of sailors more determined to desert, or more adept at eluding apprehension?

few general trends. Although the first reported desertion occurred in September 1939

(see **Figure 35**), it was not until the spring of 1941 that a

sudden increase appears to have occurred, with the rate

remaining more or less constant thereafter until the end

of the war (except for an unexplained peak in the third

quarter of 1942). The analogy to the Georgian Navy

begins to break down (but only in part) with the

observation that very few of the successful wartime

Canadian naval desertions were from operational ships.

even though the negative effects of the rapid turnover of

crews are well documented.²⁹ Of the "unrecovered"

cases, only 13 are marked as run from warships (three

from *Bangor*-class minesweepers, another three from

corvettes, five from destroyers, and two from the escort

carriers - there is no discernable pattern as to time or

place). It follows that the clear majority of deserters were fleeing shore establishments,

although the overwhelming propensity to desert from *Stadacona* (with associated units,

accounting for some 82 cases) stands in stark contrast to the other major bases at *Naden*

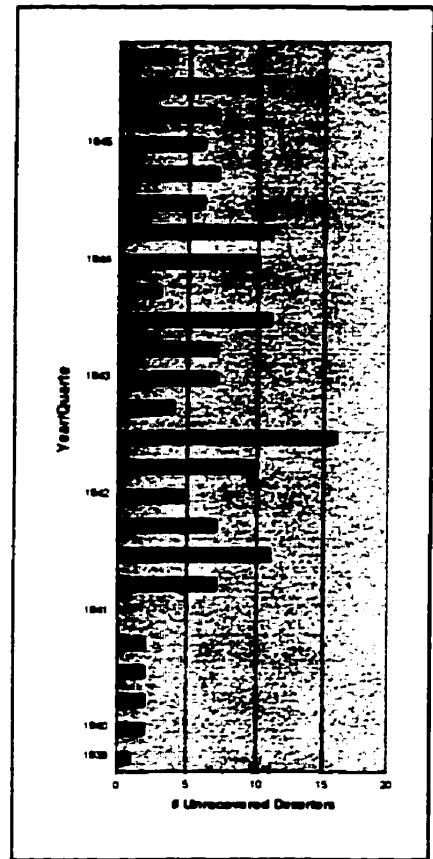


Figure 35: RCN Wartime Desertions.

²⁹ Milner, *North Atlantic Run*, pp. 55-56, 84-87, and *passim*.

(16 cases) and *Avalon* (St John's - three). The remainder were from units spread across the country (in six cases, no unit was given).³⁰

According to the precedents established by Rodgers's research into the Georgian Navy, Canadian sailors should have been deserting in far larger numbers from their ships. The apparent contradiction begins to evaporate when the work of Bob Caldwell on wartime morale and discipline is taken into account. He charts a growing indiscipline at *Stadacona* in direct relation to the rapid infusion of Volunteer Reservists into the Navy beginning in 1941, and attributes it to the failure of the RCN to integrate the VRs into the permanent force group identity.³¹ The same factors which resulted in the growth of a "VR culture" could also have given large numbers of ratings the motive and opportunity for desertion: shortened training periods which did not allow time to inspire the new sailors with the niceties of a sense of naval traditions; frequent draftings amongst ships and establishments: the quartering of sailors off-base (on "lodgings & compensation") due to inadequate barracking; and the lack of affinity with Haligonians. Individual desertions have always been a personal act; large numbers of them are a symptom of more general dissatisfaction. Caldwell notes that the poor conditions in *Stadacona* had been well-documented as early as the fall of 1942, but no remedial action was taken in the

³⁰ Whitby, "The *Iroquois* Mutiny," pp. 1-4, indicates that in the months leading to the incident in *Iroquois*, the other Canadian *Tribal*-class destroyer then in service, *Athabaskan*, experienced a string of desertions under Commander George Miles (he will figure later in the next chapter, in the rank of Commodore, as Chief of Naval Personnel). Although these more accurately fit Rodgers's definition of stragglers, it provides reason to treat these statistics with caution. None of those on the nominal list used herein originated from that ship.

³¹ Caldwell, "Morale and Discipline," *passim*.

ensuing three years of the war.³² Accepting that all Canadian naval ratings had volunteered to do their bit for the war effort, the exodus from *Stadacona* is best explained as a collective protest against the conditions prevailing in the Halifax base.

Canadian naval officers were relatively lenient with returned deserters, considering the capital nature of the crime. Again, records are sparse, but two examples described in a message by the Commanding Officer Pacific Coast serve to illustrate this point. It also seems to have mattered little whether the men had deserted from a ship or a shore establishment, and whether they had surrendered or been apprehended:

(1) Stoker 1/c [X], deserted from *Stadacona* 5th June 1944, surrendered himself on board HMCS *Discovery* at 1300 9th November 1944, sentenced to 30 days detention.

(2) O'Smn [Y], deserted CVE 53 [*Puncher*] 30 August 1944, apprehended Vancouver BC 1830 4th October 1944, sentenced to 30 days detention.³³

Rodgers describes officers of the Georgian Navy as exhibiting leniency out of a sense of "humanity" for the plight of their sailors - not to mention their more self-serving interest in reclaiming lost loyalty³⁴ - and it is entirely plausible that two centuries later Canadian officers did so for similar motives.

The continuity with the traditional practice of desertion is solidified by two of Rodgers's final observations. Firstly, he noted that the end of a war saw "the issue of sweeping orders to the Navy Board to take off the 'R's [ie, the "Run" mark] from all

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 52-55, and 123-128. On these pages, Caldwell cites a report submitted in October 1942 by the O-i-C of the RCN Barracks, Cdr K.F. Adams, who upon returning as CO of *Stadacona* in July 1945 noted none of his recommendations had been acted upon.

³³ NSS 4260-1, BURRARD [COPC] to NSHQ, 071708Z/Dec/1944.

³⁴ Rodgers, pp. 201-203.

deserters except the most serious cases....”³⁵ Indeed, in August 1946, the Canadian government passed an Order-in-Council “disposing” of all deserters “who went absent in Canada prior to the 1st January 1946 and are still absent at midnight 31st July 1946.”³⁶ The amnesty was undertaken primarily as a cost-saving measure and did not extend to persons who had deserted outside of Canada, but the effect was essentially unchanged. Rodgers’s final point, while pertinent to the Canadian wartime experience, would become only too appropriate in the postwar period: “Desertion was always a serious practical problem for the Navy, the prevention of which made all sorts of daily operations far more vexatious than they would otherwise have been, but it was fundamentally tolerable as long as recruitment could keep pace with it....”³⁷

* • *

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the RCN was not plagued with outbreaks of mass protest for some time, although the potential remained just below the surface. Before the late summer of 1945, the Naval Staff’s postwar planning was based upon the

³⁵ Rodgers, p. 202.

³⁶ NSS 4260-1, P.C. 3264, 14 August 1946. The submission is the only vehicle to put the RCN experience into context with that of the other services. It allows that:

There are at present approximately [14,100] persons who are absent without leave or in a state of desertion from the Naval, Military and Air Forces of Canada. Approximately [8100] of such persons were called out for service under the provisions of The National Resources Mobilization Act, 1940, and [6000] are General Service Personnel.

Although the submission does not break down the 6000 figure by service, the RCN nominal list offers only 164 names. Purely on the basis of unrecovered deserters, life in the RCN would not seem to have been any more unattractive than the other services.

³⁷ Rodgers, pp. 203-204.

assumption that a protracted conflict with Japan would allow for the operational employment of Canadian carrier task forces and the gradual build-up of the permanent RCN. Even the government's requirement that those joining the fight in the Far East had to re-volunteer carried in it the silver lining that any malcontents presumably would take their discharge. The premature end of the war - at least from the perspective of the Naval Staff - with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, totally confounded an easy transition to the new fleet structure. Caught between the imperatives of demobilization and the determination to establish a balanced peacetime force for the first time in the navy's history, the RCN found itself in the unenviable position of having to contract and to expand - with, as the Mainguy commission would later style it, "all the accompanying stresses and strains" - but with those stresses and strains compounded by the requirement to undertake both contraction and expansion at virtually the same time.

Although promising Volunteer Reservists had been encouraged to transfer to the RCN throughout the war, government restrictions on recruiting for the permanent force meant that not enough wartime personnel had had the chance to make the crossover. Held in abeyance since 1941, when recruiting was allowed to recommence in May 1944, most new entries continued to prefer to enlist "for hostilities only."³⁸ On VJ-day, the actual permanent naval service still numbered fewer than 3,500 all-ranks. The success of the Interim Force was predicated upon the absorption of sufficient additional experienced ratings for the limited time until new recruits could complete their training and begin to enter the fleet. But with demobilization benefits and civilian job prospects seeming so

³⁸ NSS 4600-1, "Recruits for RCN." Director of Manning to CNP, 29 September 1944.

bright, the Navy found that it could not entice enough war-weary men to stay on.³⁹ The return to peace signalled the start of an inescapable numbers game: the RCN required 10,000 men to secure its self-defined minimum for a viable peacetime establishment, and yet the permanent force numbered barely even a third of that strength. As demobilization gained momentum through the fall of 1945 and into 1946, the Chief of Naval Personnel began to take extraordinary steps to retain as many qualified technicians and experienced tradesmen as he could. These actions would inject great structural imbalances into an already chaotic process.

The first attempt at promulgating a postwar fleet employment program (these would be updated at six-month intervals, and were effective for the following year) forecast that demobilization should be nearly complete by the end of the 1945-46 fiscal year, and the strength of the RCN permanent force would be stabilized at 6600 all ranks. Published in January 1946, it admitted, however, that:

...a considerable period will elapse before the Service is up to its authorized strength of 10,000 and before all categories of personnel are sufficiently trained to carry out their normal Naval tasks. In the immediate future, therefore, every effort must be directed towards the training of first, Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) personnel....

³⁹ The database of *Crescent's* ship's company prepared for the discussion in the previous chapter indicates that some 30 of those ratings had directly joined the RCN permanent force during the war (14 having done so before July 1941, the remainder in the last year and a half of the war), and 13 had transferred from the RCNVR before the end of hostilities. Only 13 would transfer under the terms of the Interim Force, although another 17 eventually would re-enter the service.

It should be appreciated that ... this number [6600] will not be proportionately divided between officers and men; higher and lower substantive rates; or between different mens' branches. ...⁴⁰

Even in its bleakness, that January 1946 assessment proved to be wildly optimistic. In March 1946, the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel (David Groos's older brother, Harold, an Acting Commander) made a more realistic appraisal of the state of RCN manning, and took the unprecedented step of promulgating this in a message "to be read to all personnel in the Naval Service and copies are to be placed on the notice boards in the messes of Officers, Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers." It is worth reproducing at length here:

1. As demobilization in the Naval Service of "hostilities only" personnel nears completion, it becomes increasingly evident that the total number of volunteers to serve in the Continuing Navy as members of the RCN Interim Force will be far short of requirements.
2. The men of the Continuing Navy will come from five sources:
 - (i) men who joined the RCN prior to the war or during its early years
 - (ii) men who transferred to the RCN from the Reserve Forces during the war
 - (iii) men who joined the Royal Canadian Navy after the conclusion of [active] hostilities
 - (iv) men of the Royal Canadian Navy (Reserve) who have volunteered to serve as members of the Interim Force and
 - (v) WRCNS ratings in certain branches who have volunteered to serve until 1st August, 1946.
3. Most men who entered the RCN (Permanent Force) before the war or during the early years of the war have had ample opportunity for

⁴⁰ NSS 1650-26, Part 1, "Employment of Canadian Naval Forces During the Fiscal Year 1946-47." 17 January 1946. The bulk of Pile's thesis, "Beyond the Workable Little Fleet," is a comprehensive and useful survey of the development of the fleet employment plans, and the operational consequences of the inability to implement them. His study ends at the beginning of 1948, however, and does not trace the improvements made through that year.

advancement and today hold the temporary rating of Chief Petty Officer or Petty Officer.

4. Only a small proportion of the men who have volunteered for service in the Interim Force until 30th September, 1947, hold higher rates but the total number of lower ratings is still insufficient to meet the requirements of a balanced force.

5. Men who have joined the Navy since the end of Active Hostilities are still considered as under training and not available for general draft. Recruiting of men except Artificers, Artisans and Stores Assistants has reached a satisfactory rate.

6. In view of the fact that the majority of men who have served for more than four years are today CPO's or PO's an exceptional situation exists and will continue until suitable men are entered as recruits and trained to fill the gap between the higher ratings in the Navy and lower categories. During this period of unusual conditions many adjustments will have to be made. The Department does not intend to revert personnel with a Temporary higher rating.... It is confidently expected that within a year all Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers will be employed in [a] manner commensurate with their rating and ability. In the meantime the Naval Service will continue to meet its reduced manning commitments and recruit and train new entry ratings up to the requirements for personnel in the full strength of the Continuing Peacetime Navy.

7. The Department has the interest and welfare of personnel under constant careful review. Many constructive changes are planned for the Post War Navy and these will be announced as soon as all details have been completely finalized. Up to this time, it has been possible to announce only the re-establishment of Home Port Divisions and the policy of making Permanent the Temporary higher ratings. Under consideration, remain the questions of pay and the welfare of men and their families. In connection with the new system of pay... it can be said that the intention is to make remuneration for service in the Navy equal on a cover basis to that afforded men with equivalent skill and responsibility in civil life.

8. The successful completion of a great task in building up a large Navy during the war was due in a very large measure to the good services of the Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers now serving. The same spirit which enabled the Royal Canadian Navy to expand from less than 2,000 to more than 90,000 in spite of inadequate facilities during the early years of the war will carry our Service through the transition period in an even more successful manner....⁴¹

⁴¹ DHH, NSS 4000-100/14, NSHQ 211638Z/March/1946.

The incredible imbalances that came to typify the Interim Force are all described: “the total number of volunteers... will be far short of requirements”; “Most men... today hold the temporary rating of Chief Petty Officer or Petty Officer”; “the total number of lower ratings is still insufficient to meet the requirements of a balanced force”; “The Department does not intend to revert personnel with a Temporary higher rating”; “an exceptional situation exists and will continue until suitable men are entered as recruits and trained to fill the gap between the higher ratings in the Navy and lower categories”.

Why did the Naval Staff accept these conditions, and how had they become translated into practice? Although fresh recruits were not arriving at the anticipated rate of 1500 per quarter,⁴² ACNP Groos had stated that “Recruiting of men except [certain specific trades] has reached a satisfactory rate.” More troublesome was a withering “wastage” rate, with men leaving faster than they could be brought in. It was the speed of demobilization and the failure of the Interim Force offer which left the Naval Staff few agreeable alternatives in its manning policies. The extension of voluntary service by the WRCNS through July 1946 was implemented to manage the administrative dispersal of discharged men and surplus ships, and had little to do with the day-to-day operations of the service. To attend to these latter concerns, the Naval Staff resorted at first to postponing the demobilization of certain trades beyond the planned end-date of February

⁴² NSS 1650-26, Part 1, DoP to Naval Staff, “Manning Priority - Seagoing Units,” 27 December 1945. This memorandum predicted that, assuming a strength of 6600 on 1 April 1946 and a quarterly intake thereafter of 1500 men, less discharges, the RCN would be at full complement by 1 January 1947. Although the precise intake and discharge figures for each quarter cannot be determined, *ibid.*, NSHQ signal 301828Z/March/1946 still noted that “In view of the favourable recruiting situation since the beginning of the year it will be possible to advance the estimated manning schedule....”

1946.⁴³ This was met by a rash of petitions direct from sailors to the minister, such as this telegram: "One Hundred Naval Fire Fighters... being kept in [their] unit against their will... we turn to you in desperation...".⁴⁴ Bold statements such as this threatened an outbreak in the RCN of the mutinous incidents beginning to appear at overseas Army and RCAF bases.

At the same time, a large number of the volunteers which the Navy did get under the Interim Force offer were all the wrong types. The much-needed but low-paid Able and Leading rates were only too eager to abandon the hard life of the Navy for the promise of relative civilian comfort and prosperity. The better paid senior ratings (many of whom had endured unemployment during the Depression), in contrast, had no such incentive to leave. Even as the Complement Committee was beginning its deliberations, it was evident that, in some trades, the overall numbers of chiefs and petty officers were in excess of any establishment which could be determined for a 10,000-man force. The irony was that there was a segment of these men who were quite ready to be demobilized. Captain Frank Houghton, the commanding officer of the navy's first fleet aircraft carrier, *Warrior*, in which many of *Crescent's* future crew were serving, brought this fact to the attention of the Naval Staff in June 1946:

A number of requests have already been received, and more are understood to be forthcoming from ratings who claim that when, mainly in 1940/41, they volunteered to join the Navy, they were told that the only way they could do so was to sign on for a Seven Year Engagement [ie, join

⁴³ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 1457, NSS 4240-12, NSHQ signal "131S", 062223Z/March/1946.

⁴⁴ NSS 4240-12, CN Telegraph to MNS Abbott, 9 April 1946.

the permanent force]. They further claim that no mention whatever was made of the possibility of joining the RCNVR as "Hostilities Only" ratings; and that in several cases it was implied by the Recruiting Authorities that they would have no difficulty in obtaining their discharge on the conclusion of hostilities.⁴⁵

Their grievance was only heightened when, after November 1945, the Navy reverted to a five-year engagement period to bring its terms of service in line with those of the Army and Air Force. But the RCN dared not discharge any of these seven-year men, else the pitiful paper strength of 4.111 ratings shrink even lower. While stemming the immediate problem, the various steps that were taken to retain against their will men anxious to demobilize were in the end counter-productive: they had an understandably negative impact upon the morale of the affected men, in turn spreading dissatisfaction throughout the fleet: later, they would presage a sudden rise in releases as the seven-year engagements were finally completed.

With the exit door of "recruitment under false pretences" firmly shut, frustrated men began to examine more extreme measures. One option was to buy their way out, and in this they had the tacit support of the Naval Staff. Early discharge "By Purchase" had been allowed during the inter-war years, but was held in abeyance during hostilities. In April 1946, the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel recommended its re-institution, in part out of genuine consideration for ratings who had solid civilian job prospects (proof of an offer of lucrative employment had to be produced), but also in the expectation that it would prove to be a slight disincentive to discharge, while also a chance for the service to

⁴⁵ NSS 4240-12. CO *Warrior* to Naval Secretary, 11 June 1946.

get a modest return on its expenses.⁴⁶ When the fleet was made aware of the policy in May, however, the initial rush of requests prompted NSHQ to respond that, "... until the Naval Forces are removed from Active Service, discharge By Purchase can not, repetition can not, be considered."⁴⁷ More accurately, the Navy's desire to implement the procedure found itself stranded upon the shoals of tri-service harmonization of conditions of service. In this case, the government's newfound ambition to impose administrative efficiency on the Department of National Defence was made manifest through the Personnel Members Committee (PMC). When the RCN's representative presented the "By Purchase" scheme to PMC at its 79th meeting, on 16 May 1946, it was immediately apparent that, although the Army and Air Force also were having trouble filling their peacetime establishments, their problems were of a different nature from the Navy's:

...Both the Army and Air Force Members pointed out that... it would not be desirable for them at this stage to re-institute discharge by purchase, but they had no objection to the Navy proceeding with the necessary amendments to re-institute this regulation. It was decided that although the Navy would effect the re-institution of this regulation prior to the Army and Air Force, the regulation itself, i.e., the rates payable for discharge per rank, should be the same.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 1457, NSS 4240-17, ACNP to CNP, 23 April 1946. The incumbent, Acting Commander P.E. Haddon, estimated that "15% of present discharges would fall into [this] category." It took some time to work out the details, but *ibid.*, "Draft Amendment to [KRCNs]," 7 August 1946, art. 7.84 determined the Purchase amount to be \$100.00 up to and including three months from entry or re-engagement, and after that time, for men on a five-year engagement the pay-back was \$4.00 for each unexpired month, with those on seven-year engagements owing \$2.50 for each unexpired month.

⁴⁷ NSS 4240-17, Discharge Categories, NSHQ signal "197S", 091854Z/May/1946.

⁴⁸ NSS 4240-17, "Extract from the Minutes of the 79th Meeting of the [PMC]...." 16 May 1946.

Through the last half of 1946, the Naval Staff found itself engaged in a continuing debate with the other services and the Deputy Minister over the ethics, ways, and means of Discharge by Purchase. It was not until December that the details had been sufficiently smoothed for the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Naval Services to pass the draft KRCN amendments to the Deputy Minister; with the need for his own review, and the arrival of a new minister, the DM did not pass them up to Claxton until February 1947.⁴⁹

The frustration was beginning to be felt at all rank levels. It led to bizarre situations such as that reported in January 1947 by the Officer-in-Charge of the Navy's manning depot in Esquimalt:

It is noted at the present time Esquimalt Port Division is in excess of complement 11 Chief Petty Officers [of the Seaman Branch], 102 Petty Officers, 8 Chief Stokers and 46 Stoker Petty Officers.... [It] is interesting to note the case of Petty Officer [X] who applied for discharge [by Purchase]... but this was not approved by [NSHQ].⁵⁰

The officer making that case was Acting Commander Harold Groos. Almost a year after he had penned and promulgated the Naval Staff's assessment of its manning problems, he could discern no progress. Worse, he could clearly see the negative implications of continuing to retain these surplus senior ratings:

...a desirable personnel policy is to always have a small percentage of vacancies for higher ratings kept open to encourage junior men to qualify for advancement. Under existing circumstances, it is doubtful if any men can be advanced to Chief Petty Officer or Petty Officer in the Seaman and Stoker branches during the next three or four years.

⁴⁹ NSS 4240-17, ADM (Naval Services) to DM, 13 December 1946; and DM to MND, 10 February 1947.

⁵⁰ NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, Box 1454, file 4240-1, O-i-C RCN Sub-Depot Esquimalt to COPC, 17 January 1947.

The compounding effect of the problem of having too many senior rates is illustrated by the case of Albert Leo Bonner.⁵¹ He had joined the St John, New Brunswick Division of the Volunteer Reserve in August 1938, and, because he knew semaphore from the Boy Scouts, on the outbreak of war was immediately employed without further training as a signalman. When the U-boat threat spread to the western North Atlantic early in 1941 and the Newfoundland Escort Force was established. Leading Seaman Bonner found himself on board the corvette *Chambly* as yeoman to the officer-in-charge of the Force, Commander "Chummy" Prentice. Bonner had great natural ability, and although he never had any formal training as a signalman, he later spent a short time at the RCN Communication School, HMCS *St Hyacinthe*, as an instructor. He eventually was selected to commission *Uganda* as Mainguy's Chief Yeoman of Signals. When the war ended, he wanted to transfer to the RCN, but the small Communications Branch already had too many senior permanent force ratings. Under the "no-disrating" policy, he milled around *Stadacona* with hundreds of other chiefs and petty officers from September 1945 until May 1946, waiting for an elusive position "commensurate with [his] rating and ability." When he could not take it any more, he got himself discharged and immediately rejoined the RCN as an ordinary signalman. It meant that he had to take the formal courses he had never received (although had taught), but he finally learned the theoretical basics of his trade. By September 1947, he was back at sea in *Nootka*, and within the year was rated petty officer. The upper ranks of the Communicator Branch were still so overborne that it was not until August 1951 that the

⁵¹ Interview with Chief Yeoman (ret'd) Al Bonner, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 28 May 1998.

man who had been Chief Yeoman of Signals in the only RCN cruiser to see action in the Second World War finally was re-made a Chief Petty Officer.⁵²

Approval for Discharge by Purchase as a release category finally was obtained late in March 1947,⁵³ when the RCN's strength stood at 860 officers and 5268 men (for a total of 6128). It came not a moment too soon, for Claxton's imposition in January of the 75 per cent ceiling had threatened to expose the illusion of the Navy's manning situation.⁵⁴ The RCN already had too many senior rates for a 10,000-man establishment, and now was even more perilously overborne with chiefs and petty officers. As expected, the applications for discharge began to arrive almost immediately. The surprise is the extra consideration with which they were treated by NSHQ. Early in May, the Chief of the

⁵² Bonner was commissioned from the ranks in 1953, and served as a communications staff officer and instructor before retiring in 1963. He remains active with the Halifax branch of the Canadian Chiefs and Petty Officers Association.

⁵³ NSS 4240-17, "Discharge of Men by Purchase," Naval Secretary to distribution list, 27 March 1947.

⁵⁴ DND Annual Report, 1947, p. 18, and DND Annual Report, 1948, p. 14. Where the actual strengths are normally stated in the end-of-fiscal year annual reports to Parliament, the 1947 report instead presented a complicated table of "Reductions in Naval Personnel during the year 1946-47". At a quick glance, this actually appears to present figures of 1303 officers and 7050 men, for a total of 8353 (those numbers in fact included a large number of reservists who apparently were "lost" in the table's presentation of the recent amalgamation of the wartime RCNVR and RCNR into a new peacetime Royal Canadian Naval Reserve establishment). Was this merely a mangled presentation style, or was the Naval Staff purposefully dissembling the actual strength of the RCN to make Parliament (and perhaps the Minister?) think that the 75 per cent ceiling would be imposing a reduction on the Navy? Even a later attempt in DND Annual Report, 1954, p. 73, Appendix 6, to track "Strengths... during [the] Past Twenty-Five Years," was caught in the charade and cites an inaccurate total of 7177. To determine the figures for 1947, it was necessary to extrapolate back from the 1948 figures.

Naval Staff, Vice-Admiral Reid, approved a recommendation by CNP, which had been brought on by:

...this request by P.O. ["X", of the Seaman branch] being a typical case, ie, compassionate grounds are not strong and if there were a deficit in Petty Officers it would probably not be approved.

I would recommend that where there is a surplus, as in this case, that discharge be "Services Completed" (ie, free) but that where there is a deficiency, discharge be only by purchase.⁵⁵

It is not possible, from a review of the files of persons serving in *Crescent* in 1949, to gauge the success of applications for discharge "By Purchase" before that time, other than to note that these same files are littered with refused requests which had been submitted throughout 1947 and 1948. These include cases such as that of sailor #139, which was investigated in May 1947 by one of the newly created Special Branch Personnel Selection Officers, who firmly recommended discharge: "... this man is not interested in service life... and his depression and disinterest will hinder any satisfactory adjustment to service life."⁵⁶ Even though he was a Stoker, of which there was at that time a surplus,⁵⁷ his application was turned down. The reply from NSHQ does not survive on file. Was it because he was an Able rating with fewer than two years of service, or was it his equally dismal prospects as a civilian?

⁵⁵ NSS 4240-17, "Discharge by Purchase," CNP to CNS, 6 May 1947.

⁵⁶ NAC, PRC, Personnel file, sailor #169, "Personnel Selection Officer Report," 11 August 1947.

⁵⁷ NSS 4260-1, NSHQ signal "405S", 062251Z/February/1947, which reported "it is necessary to eliminate a surplus of approximately 200 Stokers II," offering a choice of "Immediate voluntary transfer to Ordinary Seaman, Supply Assistant, Sick Berth Attendants, or Bandsman," or "voluntary release from engagement."

If the requests were not being received favourably in all instances, it was most likely because NSHQ was still caught up in the problem of overall numbers, and the easing of impediments to discharges was proving a little too successful. A study undertaken by the Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel in August 1947 into "Recruiting and Wastage of RCN Men" over the first six months of the year confirmed that the Navy was losing ground: where recruiting had produced a not unhealthy "inflow" of 421 men, the "outflow" had been 732, for a net loss of 311 men.⁵⁸ Where 97 men had left under the item "Engagement Expired" (practically all of these after their first term of service, and hence recruited in 1940), and another 79 were deemed "Unsuitable" (a euphemism for "troublemaker"), only 41 had taken their discharge "By Purchase". Of greater concern to DCNP was that "It will be seen that the chief loss was due to men going out on Compassionate grounds [104] or Services Completed [286]." The Chief of Naval Personnel, Commodore Miles, already had suspected this trend. In mid-June he had advised the fleet that requests for discharge prior to completion of engagement were exceeding the annual efficient turnover of ratings (estimated to be allowed at ten per cent):

1. In particular, the number of insufficiently substantiated requests reaching [NSHQ] is unacceptable. To achieve uniformity and a just basis for approval of such applications, Commanding Officers are to bear the following in mind when forwarding such requests.

⁵⁸ NSS 4600-3, "Recruiting & Wastage - RCN Men," DCNP to CNP, 16 August 1947, with appendices. This is a very detailed and important document: the main table presents a global compilation of the main figures; "Appendix A" shows the number of applications versus attestations, and of transfers from the RCNR; and "Appendix B" provides an analysis of wastage under the various discharge categories, grouped as "normal", "controllable", and "punishment".

(A) Discharge by Purchase - the applicant must produce strong compassionate reasons for discharge in addition to documentary evidence in support of the claim regarding wages offered, etc..., and it must be confirmed that he can pay the purchase money.

(B) Compassionate Discharge - this category of discharge is to be recommended only when evidence can conclusively prove that the applicant or his dependants is [sic] suffering acute hardship by his retention in the Service.

(C) Discharge to Continue Education - applicants must prove that they are fully qualified to enter the university or technical school and must not have completed one year's service.

2. In the event of surplus in Branch and Rate of the applicant, discharge will normally be approved "Services Completed"....

3. These instructions are not to be construed as hindering a Commanding Officer from recommending the discharge "Unsuitable" when, in his opinion, this is necessary.⁵⁹

Despite the prescriptions of this signal, which became known through the fleet as "CANGEN 30", the outflow continued unabated through the summer. Looking to turn around the continuing manning crisis, in the fall of 1947, Minister Claxton queried the three service chiefs over the number of releases being granted other than at the end of engagement (this memorandum, plus other oblique comments throughout the files, indicates that the Army and RCAF were experiencing similar difficulties in filling their establishments). Claxton had been informed "that in Australia and New Zealand there does not appear to be any provision for release by purchase and release on compassionate grounds is allowed only in the most exceptional circumstances."⁶⁰ To this, Commander Haddon, the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel, responded with the triple retort, that:

(A) The New Zealand Navy mutinied.

⁵⁹ NSS 4240-1, NSHQ signal, "CANGEN 30", 122123Z/June/1947.

⁶⁰ NSS 4240-12, MND to CGS/CNS/CAS, 24 September 1947.

- (B) Consider discharge by purchase provided the *necessary safety valve* whereby we have been able to weed out possible ringleaders of discontent and yet retain some remuneration to the Crown for teaching men a trade.
- (C) Fact is, rightly or wrongly, the men feel that the Services today does [sic] not offer them the career that they anticipated or that they were lead [sic] to believe.⁶¹

Commander Haddon was confident that the provisions of “CANGEN 30 intelligently administered [are] the nearest approach to an equitable system that we can achieve.”⁶²

His comments most surely were motivated also by the knowledge that Canadian naval ratings already were making their frustration known through a safety valve of the more traditional sort: desertion and mutiny.

* * *

The first signs of mass protest in the fleet had begun about the same time that the amnesty for wartime deserters was in final preparation. In late-May 1946, the NSHQ Staff Officer of Shore Patrols began keeping a tally of the more recent “runners”, issuing reports at roughly two-week intervals: the first listed eight new deserters, then only one in June, and four in early July.⁶³ Suddenly, in mid-July, he reported “15 additional deserters”, and this became a trend. In November, NSHQ alerted the commanders on both coasts, that “The number of ratings marked ‘Run’ in recent months is a matter for

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Minute, A/CNP [A/Cdr P.E. Haddon] to CNP [nd, September 1947]. Emphasis added.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ NSS 4260-1, “Report on Desertions,” Staff Officer, Shore Patrol *Bytown*, 20 May 1946, and ff. Not all of the reports are held on the file.

some concern...”,⁶⁴ and the Naval Secretary provided the statistics gathered over the previous three months to support the contention:

Ship/Establish't	Stad	Scot'n	York	Naden	Giv'chy	Uganda	Warrior	Micmac	Nootka	Cres'nt	TOTAL	Recovered
AUGUST	3	2	0	1	0	2	0	3	0	2	13	0
SEPT	10	1	0	3	0	0	2	2	2	1	21	4
OCTOBER	3	0	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	15	13
TOTAL	16	3	1	7	1	3	3	6	5	4	49	17
Under 12 mos.	13	3	1	5	1	0	2	3	4	2		34 or 70%
Over 12 mos.	3	0	0	2	0	3	1	3	1	2		15 or 30%
Seamen	3	1	1	3	0	3	3	3	5	3		25 or 50%
ER	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0		10 or 20%
Others	7	1		3	1			1		1		14 or 30%

While the large number who deserted from *Stadacona* does not appear markedly out of line with the wartime pattern, the number running from ships - and especially from the three destroyers, with their smaller complements - was a new development. Also worrisome were the facts that fully half of the deserters were Seamen, and nearly a third were more experienced rates with a year or more of service. When the situation continued unabated through November, December, and into January 1947 (there were 26 in that month alone), the new minister, Brooke Claxton, rose to make a public statement in the House of Commons on 22 January, in which he:

...strongly recommended deserters from [the] armed forces to surrender at once and said that those who surrendered voluntarily by 31st March 1947 will have this fact and any other mitigatory circumstances taken into account when their cases are determined.⁶⁵

That had no immediately noticeable effect, so in a further attempt at reconciliation NSHQ assured any deserters who surrendered before end-March “that marriage and children’s

⁶⁴ NSS 4260-1, Naval Secretary to COAC/COPC and CO *Warrior*, 14 November 1946.

⁶⁵ NSS 4260-1, reproduced and promulgated in NSHQ signal “216A” 261245Z/Jan 1947.

allowances will be payable at [the] current rate from [the] date on which [they]... rejoin after desertion.”⁶⁶ In total disregard to this overture, the number of men surrendering actually declined in February and March, and while desertions also dropped in March and April, that proved to be only temporary (see **Figure 36**). A July 1947 report compiling the number of desertions over the previous nine months described two ominous trends: there was “a probable desertion rate of 200 per annum, 50 of these would not be recovered”; and, “There has been a marked decrease in desertions amongst ratings with less than twelve month’s service” - implying in consequence that most of the deserters now were more senior rates.⁶⁷

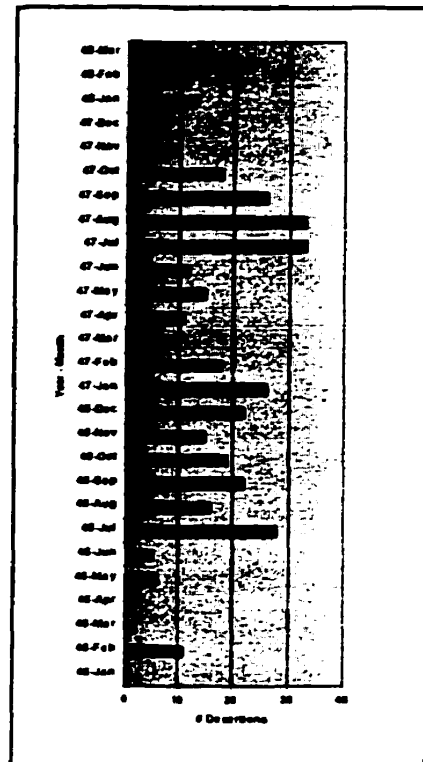


Figure 36: RCN Desertions, 1946-48.

Commander E.W. Finch-Noyes was the Executive Officer at *Stadacona*, site of the greatest number of desertions, and he was responsible ultimately for all those sailors who had run on the East Coast (when a man was confirmed as “run” from his ship, he was charged for disposition to the books of either *Stadacona* or *Naden*, as appropriate). Finch-Noyes determined to get to the bottom

⁶⁶ NSS 4260-1, NSHQ signal “236A” 282054Z/Feb/1947.

⁶⁷ NSS 4260-1. Naval Secretary to distribution list, 9 July 1947. See also *ibid.*, SO Shore Patrol, 22 August 1947, which gave statistics for all of 1946 and 1947 year-to-date; and the follow-on quarterly reports from the Naval Secretary, *ibid.*, 17 January 1948, and 6 April 1948. **Figure 36** is drawn from a compilation of these sources.

of the problem by interviewing all those deserters who had surrendered or been apprehended and returned to his custody. Over a six-month period, he investigated some 30 cases,⁶⁸ from whom he determined four broad categories of complaints: "Trouble at home", "Fed up with the Service", "Inability to Accept Responsibility or Discipline", and "The Man who is offered a very much Higher Paid Job After Signing On". While he had much sympathy for those in the first group, and a certain empathy for some in the second - especially the Cooks and Stewards who had to put in long hours, and others who swore some sort of misrepresentation at the time of their recruitment - he had little time for the third category: "This type is just as well out of uniform as he won't be much use to the Navy." As for the fourth group, he concluded "This type will seldom resort to desertion until he has tried the legal method of getting out...", that is, discharge By Purchase.

When Finch-Noyes's report finally made its way to NSHQ, Commodore Miles was inclined to dismiss it: "I do not agree that a survey of a number of malcontents is a satisfactory means of arriving at a decision as to 'what is wrong with the Navy'; men in close custody charged with desertion can be expected to make the best case for themselves."⁶⁹ Admiral Grant, however, observed that "This material jibes with" reports he had received from the West Coast.⁷⁰ The Personnel Selection Officer at *Naden*,

⁶⁸ NSS 4260-1. XO *Stadacona* to CO, 28 October 1947. The report included not only Finch-Noyes's observations and conclusions, but also statements from each of the men. The whole package was forwarded to the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast on 31 October, although Rear-Admiral Taylor did not pass it on to NSHQ until 24 January 1948.

⁶⁹ NSS 4260-1, CNP to CNS, 28 January 1948.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, CNS return minute to CNP, 30 January 1948.

Lieutenant (SB) T.H. Crone, had submitted "An Analysis of Morale in the Royal Canadian Navy" based upon interviews with a number of sailors who passed through his office.⁷¹ Without any foreknowledge of Finch-Noyes's survey, it covered much of the same territory, and the stories of these men could not be dismissed as those of self-serving malcontents. With some editing, mostly to preserve the anonymity of the individual sailors. Grant had it reprinted in the RCN Monthly Review,⁷² although the confidential status of that journal restricted its distribution and impact.

Another report from the west coast which Grant recognized as important was one from the Commanding Officer of the cruiser *Ontario*, prepared a month after the "incident" in that ship in August (which will be described in more detail below). The immediate response - subsequently perpetuated in The Mainguy Report - had been to blame the admitted pomposity of the Executive Officer for the lock-in. After some study of the problems in his ship, however, Captain James Hibbard - who had dealt with a mutinous crew before, when he assumed command of *Iroquois* in August 1943 - was of a different opinion. He felt that the root cause now was that "when a man signs an agreement [on joining] he does not know or understand conditions of Service...."⁷³ This misunderstanding was only worsened when those conditions were changed during the period of his engagement, and Hibbard could point to at least three areas in which this

⁷¹ NSS 4490-1, FOPC to Naval Secretary, 21 January 1948, with attachments.

⁷² Royal Canadian Navy Monthly Review, vol II no 6 (August 1948), pp. 23-29.

⁷³ NSS 4240-12. "Discharge of Naval Personnel," CO *Ontario* to COPC, 15 September 1947.

had happened. The first was one commonly presented by sailors, that “however true or untrue this may be,” they felt the cost of living and wages ashore had risen considerably, but their own pay did not provide adequate compensation. The next two were equally attributable to the penny-pinching inclination of the government: he cited the cancellation of assisted transportation on leave (“travel warrants”) and the recent ruling that rations and quarters be considered a taxable allowance for income tax purposes as “two particular points in which the men feel they are unjustly treated.” Hibbard had opened his letter with the recommendation “that men who are discontent in the Service... be allowed to purchase their discharge”, and he concluded on the same note:

I cannot recommend too strongly that immediate action be taken to permit men who are dissatisfied with the Service and who can produce evidence of permanent employment in Civilian life to purchase their discharge.⁷⁴

Only a week before the Minister was to castigate his Service Chiefs for being too easy with early releases, the captain of a mutinous ship was issuing a plea to his superiors: if they could not fix his sailors’ complaints over their terms of service, at least do not remove from their options any of the more legal types of safety valve.

Ontario is remembered as the ship from which the mutineers of 1947 and their poisonous ideas were spread amongst the rest of the fleet, only to foment discontent again in 1949. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ratings in every other ship had the same complaints, and unrest was palpable through the entire fleet. The incident in the cruiser in fact marked the end of nearly a year of rising tension.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The first postwar “incident” in a Canadian warship had occurred in the destroyer HMCS *Micmac* on 5 December 1946. From it, Leading Seaman Albert Allan Elliott has the distinction of being the only Canadian sailor to be court-martialled for mutinous activity, on two counts that he “did endeavour to seduce a man from his duty or allegiance to His Majesty”, and a third count that he “did unlawfully attempt to stir up a disturbance in... the ship’s company of HMCS *Micmac*.”⁷⁵ The incident followed a dispute with the Executive Officer over a question about short leave, when Elliott “attempt[ed] to force a make and mend clothing by keeping the hands in the messdecks at ‘Hands Fall In’.”⁷⁶ He was summarily tried by his captain, Commander R.L. Hennessy, who found him guilty and sentenced him to 90 days’ detention. Upon the case being sent to NSHQ for review, however, it was determined that the offence in fact warranted a court martial. When a Standing Court Martial was convened at *Stadacona* to hear the case on 17 January 1947, there was little difference as to the outcome: Elliott once again was found guilty. He was sentenced to twelve months in detention, although on appeal the minister reduced this to three months.

News of such stern action probably had a chilling effect on the appetite of Canadian sailors to act out any more lock-ins, but it still hung barely below the surface. Instead, frustrated men returned to the recourse of desertion, and the numbers of ratings in Canadian naval ships and establishments marked “run” continued unchecked through the

⁷⁵ DHH 82/401, “Men of the Canadian Naval Service Tried by Court Martial,” p. 16, 17 January 1947.

⁷⁶ CO *Nootka* to COAC, “Circumstantial Letter,” 13 December 1946. A “make and mend” is a naval routine allowing an afternoon off.

winter, spring and into the summer of 1947. One of the sailors interviewed by Finch-Noyes at *Stadacona* was an Ordinary Seaman who had deserted from the *Tribal*-class destroyer *Nootka*, and his statement reflects the mood of many in the fleet:

Before boarding HMCS *Nootka* I was perfectly contented in the RCN, but it took only a short time for me to get fed up. Aboard HMCS *Micmac* and at the shore stations I was at, we were treated as human beings, but the *Nootka* was nothing less than a "slave ship". That wasn't what I expected or intended to take from anyone. ... During the three days on the *Nootka*, I never had a place to sling my hammock but if I had been caught sleeping on the lockers I would have been rattled [ie, put on XO's defaulters], so I was beat before I started and I wasn't the only one.

I know I wasn't on the *Nootka* long enough to have any justifiable reason for deserting but when the whole crew of a ship get together in the Mess Decks and talk about walking off there must be something radically wrong someplace, and from what I heard and saw the trouble was all caused by the First Lieutenant who seemed to think he was a "little tin God" or someone just as important [this was an expression frequently used to describe officers]. The *Nootka* never would have sailed from Halifax at the end of July if the men had been organized.... The *Nootka*, it seems has the largest number of deserters, so some sort of an investigation is plainly needed, but there is such a gap between the Ordinary Seaman and the Authorities at Ottawa that we could do nothing but wait until someone in authority becomes curious and starts finding things out for themselves.⁷⁷

For all his untrustworthiness as a malcontent, this seaman was incredibly prescient. He had deserted from *Nootka* in early August. There had been a lock-in in the ship sometime just before then, and by the time he was apprehended and this statement taken in October, "the Authorities in Ottawa" had already concluded a major investigation into the state of morale in the RCN.

⁷⁷ NSS 4260-1, XO *Stadacona* to CO, 28 October 1947, *op. cit.*, "Statement of OS Robert White, deserted *Nootka* on sailing 3 August 1947 from Newport, Rhode Island," [statement dated] 27 October 1947, at *Stadacona*.

The differing accounts - both admittedly vague recollections⁷⁸ - of a lock-in on board *Nootka* lead one to wonder if there were not one but a series of incidents in that ship? The Navigator, Lieutenant (later Rear-Admiral) D.L. Hannington, recalls it happening in May, the day the ship returned from the Spring Cruise, while at the ammunition jetty in the Bedford Basin (which would make it 14 May 1947⁷⁹). Apparently, the captain, Commander H.S. Raynor,⁸⁰ made some sort of complaint about the progress of ammunitioning the ship. Hannington's recollection is fuzzy, but he distinctly recalls "a large number of men locking themselves in their messdeck for several hours." There is no record in the ship's log or reports of proceedings of any sort of incident, but the ship did remain at the ammunition jetty overnight and did not return to the Halifax Dockyard until late the next day. Two days later, Hannington left the ship to take up an appointment in NSHQ.⁸¹ The Gunner's Yeoman at the time was Leading Seaman Max Reid (he commissioned from the ranks in 1948 and retired in the rank of captain). Although he would have been directly concerned with the ammunitioning process, he remembers no incident at that time, and indeed felt that Raynor was a good

⁷⁸ Interviews, Rear-Admiral (ret'd) Daniel Hannington, Esquimalt, BC, 7 October 1997; and, Captain (ret'd) Max Reid, Ottawa, 26 February 1999. Lending credibility to each account is the fact of their being tied in their authors' memories to precise events: in Hannington's case, return from the Spring Cruise and while at the ammunitioning jetty; for Reid, it was the collision involving *Micmac*.

⁷⁹ NAC, RG 24, vol 11,530, file AC1926-355/16 (vol I), "HMCS *Nootka*, Report of Proceedings [for May 1947]," 2 June 1947.

⁸⁰ Raynor later served as Chief of the Naval Staff, 1960-64.

⁸¹ Interview Hannington; NAC, RG 24, vol 8850, HMCS *Nootka* Ship's Log, 14-17 May 1947; and *Nootka* RoP [for May], *op. cit.*

commanding officer (Reid had also served as Captain's Cox'n, or personal assistant, as distinct from Ship's Coxswain). His recollection was that the trouble transpired later in mid-summer, by which time the normal rotation of appointments had put Lieutenant-Commander M.G. Stirling in command of *Nootka*. Stirling had commanded *St Laurent* during the war and commissioned *Crescent's* sister-ship *Crusader* before she was placed into reserve. His inaugural cruise in *Nootka* took the ship to Quebec City, where, on 26 June 1947, Brooke Claxton was received on board for his own first sea-time in the Navy. The quick trip up the St Lawrence River to Montreal appears not to have left any great impression on the Minister of National Defence, although he sent a polite letter of thanks to Stirling, who in turn attached it to his monthly report of proceedings. That same report ended, however, with the "regret... that during the stay in Montreal six men deserted."⁸² Reid remembers the seething unrest in the ship, and "constant talk about holding a lock-in", of which he was not a ringleader, but, as Senior Hand of the Mess, was a willing participant. Although he had served in a cruiser and saw many of the same problems there, he attributes the greater indiscipline in the destroyers to two factors: "no professional regulating staff..., [and] Interim Force Personnel."⁸³ A cruiser, being established as a training ship, had a higher proportion of new entries, and a much larger contingent of Gunnery Instructors (Chief Petty Officers of the Seaman branch) to "regulate" discipline. Destroyers relied upon a greater degree of self-discipline among

⁸² *Nootka*. "Report of Proceedings [for June 1947]," 8 July 1947 (with letters from and to MND as enclosures).

⁸³ Reid to author, 11 February 1999 [held on interview file].

the ratings, but Reid recalls that “[the Interim Force] program... managed to bring in many misfits and trouble-makers.... [There were] a half-dozen in the ship [who] continually bucked the system but more severe was their influence on the junior ratings.”⁸⁴ It was this group who finally organized a lock-in for the afternoon of 16 July 1947. Men were gathering in the mess deck after lunch instead of falling in after “Out Pipes”. when a report was received that *Micmac* had collided in fog with the SS *Yarmouth County* in the Halifax approaches. All previous thoughts were put aside as the crew of *Nootka* raised steam and sailed to the aid of their comrades.

Technically, no mutinous incident had occurred. Stirling had not failed to notice the disquiet in his ship, however, and turned to the Chief of Staff for the Commanding Officer Atlantic Coast for direction. Captain W.B.L. Holms had gained some sensitivity since July 1943, when he had been the commanding officer of *Iroquois*, and he arranged for several “guests” to embark in *Nootka* for her next cruise, for anti-submarine exercises with the US Navy off Rhode Island in early August. Their presence did not arouse undue attention. Lieutenant R.W. Timbrell was the officer in charge of the A/S School at *Stadacona*, so he had every reason to be there. Nor was it uncommon for someone of the station of Chaplain (Protestant) J.L. Graham and of Surgeon-Lieutenant G.E. Robinson to join ships from time to time. In this instance, however,

These officers were requested to furnish reports of their observations because... by the nature of their duties, [they] were at the same time

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, and interview, Reid. Examination of *Crescent*'s personnel records confirmed this appraisal, revealing that among that ship's interim force ratings were many very good, dependable individuals, even if several others had long Conduct Sheets listing a variety of petty offences.

outside observers and also in a position to get to know the men, and it is felt that some of their findings may be of value to higher authorities.⁸⁵

Timbrell observed the “lack of power of command of the present-day Petty Officer compared to his pre-war predecessor” and that “the lack of knowledge of the ship’s future movements is a most unsettling thing for a man with a family.” Chaplain Graham covered a wide range of “quality of life” items, from lack of assisted travel warrants, through complaints about the assessment of income tax, to the need for reform of the pay system to cover the actual cost of living of the men and their dependents. On the chaplain’s recounting of the unavailability of affordable housing in Halifax, Stirling commented that if the government would not build married quarters, the Navy should attempt “to interest a large investment corporation in erecting [rental] apartment blocks or housing estates in Government-donated (tax-free) land.” To another of Graham’s observations on messing arrangements, Stirling noted that a feasibility study on cafeteria-style messing was then being conducted in *Nootka*. Robinson covered much of the same ground, observing that “the young man of today requires more in the way of amenities than did his counterpart of twenty or even ten years ago.” On this point, Stirling added the caution, that:

This section is written from the mainly civilian viewpoint that this officer really has, he not having been thoroughly assimilated into the Navy. The officer who “makes friends” with his men is more apt to be a liability than an asset.... This, whilst understood by most prewar officers, is definitely

⁸⁵ NSS 4490-1, vol. 1, “Morale and Discipline in H.M.C. Destroyers” (DNA 4490-355), CO *Nootka* to COAC, 5 September 1947.

not understood by many of the present day officers. This point shows the necessity for all officers to undergo the Divisional Course. ...⁸⁶

When some months later the Naval Secretary learned of *Nootka's* informal inquiry and requested a copy, the COAC, Rear-Admiral C.R.H. Taylor, explained that he had not forwarded it because he was "not in favour of 'unqualified outside interests' wandering about mess decks"⁸⁷ - a clear dismissal of the observations by the chaplain and the surgeon. NSHQ, however, had been conducting its own investigation, and *Nootka's* report was not far different from the one produced in Ottawa.

The Naval Staff had become concerned in July 1947 over a report from Finch-Noyes in *Stadacona* concerning "the wholesale [sic] withdrawal of candidates... for the Gunnery Instructor Course in the United Kingdom."⁸⁸ The five senior ratings from *Stadacona* each had their own reasons for declining the course, mostly involving the entirely legitimate compassionate concerns that overseas moves of their dependents had not been approved, even though the course was a year long, and the men did not wish any further lengthy separation from their families so soon after the war. Although submitted separately, there evidently had been some collusion in the preparation and submission of the withdrawal requests. Coming in the midst of all the desertions and other incidents in the fleet, the fact "that our best Seamen CPO's and PO's are those concerned" with this

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol 3, p. 125, refers briefly to *Nootka's* survey, although without the context of the more important Morale Study (discussed in the next chapter) to which it would contribute.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, NSHQ 282146Z/January/1948; and, COAC to Naval Secretary, 30 January 1948, with *Nootka* DNA 4490-355, 5 September 1947 attached.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, CO *Stadacona* [signed by XO] to Naval Secretary, 8 July 1947.

latest whiff of mass protest caught the attention of the staff of the Director of Weapons and Tactics. If no one else in NSHQ had yet put all the pieces together, Lieutenant-Commander (later Rear-Admiral) William Landymore, responding for his absent Director, saw only too clearly the operational implications of the “unsolved problems” in the Royal Canadian Navy:

As a direct result of [the]... low morale, and with it poor ship spirit and inefficient ships... not a single gunnery firing worth mentioning has been carried out in the past nine months, not a single report of torpedo firings has been received in [NSHQ]..., and A/S efficiency is at a low level.⁸⁹

At precisely the same moment that Landymore was penning these thoughts, NSHQ was transmitting signal “CANGEN 54” to the fleet, ordering the institution of Welfare Committees in all RCN ships and establishments.⁹⁰ Within days, “the subjects of recruiting generally, morale, the number of discharges, etc. were discussed informally” at a meeting of the Naval Staff, following which the Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral Frank Houghton, “requested Staff Directors to outline on paper their proposals to rectify these same very serious situations... in order that... firm recommendations [might] be submitted to Naval Board.”⁹¹ Their deliberations were given further impetus

⁸⁹ NSS 4490-1, DWT [Landymore] to VCNS, 25 July 1947.

⁹⁰ NSHQ signal “CANGEN 54”, 281445Z/July/1947, reproduced in The Mainguy Report, p. 26.

⁹¹ NSS 4490-1, Naval Secretary to Naval Staff Directors, 14 August 1947. This dissertation has specifically avoided, wherever possible, reference to the deliberations of Naval Board and the Naval Staff, on the premise of resisting the high-level analyses which these constitute, preferring to refer to them and other NSHQ staff action only as it directly related to the fleet (the minutes of each are held at DHH). It is necessary, however, to point to one other important set of records which indicate the degree to which the personnel and morale problems of the Navy were discussed at the most senior levels:

when, late on 22 August 1947, there came the report of an incident of mass insubordination in one of the crown jewels of the Canadian fleet, the cruiser *Ontario*.

When *Ontario* arrived back from the Far East at the end of the Second World War in November 1945, there were not sufficient officers and ratings to keep two cruisers in commission. While *Uganda* continued in service, adapting to her new role as a training ship, *Ontario* was placed into reserve to undergo a lengthy refit “while a considerable number of alterations and additions were carried out effecting both living conditions and fighting efficiency.”⁹² Her ship’s company was reduced to a care and maintenance complement, with the Executive Officer (or “Commander” as this position was known in cruisers and carriers) left in charge. Early in 1946, this prestigious appointment was given to Commander J.V. Brock. At the end of the war, Brock was the highest ranking officer in the RCNVR. He had served at sea for practically the duration of the conflict, and had seen much action, mostly in Royal Navy ships. He was brilliant, courageous, flamboyant, arrogant, a rabid anglophile, and yet possessed of great disdain for practically the entire pre-war RCN officer corps - and the feeling was mutual. In his memoirs, Brock allows that “I was offered an opportunity to transfer from the Volunteer Reserves to the

the Senior Officers’ Meetings, which were established by Vice-Admiral Reid (who had not wanted the appointment of CNS) “as a forum ...for senior officers to discuss the state of the service.” This common theme is re-stated at the outset of practically every such meeting, and the frequency and sympathy with which morale issues were raised is remarkable. The decision to implement Welfare Committees is a prime example, their institution in the RCN being a direct result of discussion at the Third Senior Officers’ Meeting, 29-30 May 1947. NAC, RG 24, Acc 83-84/167, box 143, NSS 1279-118, vols 1-3 are the records of interest to the immediate postwar period; a précis made of these files by the Naval Historical Section is held on DHH 1650-1(3).

⁹² DHH 8000, “History of HMCS *Ontario*,” NHS, 21 March 1962, p. 18.

Royal Canadian Navy as a career officer in the permanent force, but I was uncertain about whether to accept."⁹³ implying that the Interim Force offer was, in effect, a special deal for him. The Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff at the time, H.G. DeWolf, puts a different tone on it: "Brock used to think that he was promoted in spite of the fact that he was Volunteer Reserve.... Well it was quite the opposite. We gave Brock these positions and promoted him *because* he was a Reserve, to show [the other VRs] that it could be done."⁹⁴ In June 1947, *Ontario* was prepared to return to commission (*Uganda* was put into reserve and refit). Captain Hibbard assumed command, a full ship's company was drafted in, and on 2 August the cruiser undocked. The ship sailed on 20 August on a shakedown voyage in preparation for work-ups.

The ship was at anchor in the fleet exercise area at Nanoose Bay (near Nanaimo), when "a number of junior ratings requested the leading hands of the messes to procure an interview with the Executive Officer."⁹⁵ The recent NSHQ signals promulgating restrictions on early releases and ordering the establishment of Welfare Committees,

⁹³ Brock. The Dark Broad Seas [memoirs, vol I], pp. 177-178.

⁹⁴ Interview, DeWolf. One must question the negative effects that serving under such an ego must have had upon shaping the attitudes *Crescent's* future XO.

⁹⁵ The Mainguy Report, p. 30. Despite general knowledge of the incident, accounts of what transpired are scarce and, as with many of the incidents, at variance in many respects. The Mainguy Report, pp. 30-31, establishes the broad outline and is the one most other versions are based upon. This author is indebted to the further insight gained in an interview with one of the lower deck participants, Able Seaman Dick Berg. Although not a ringleader, Berg was also a participant in the 26 February 1949 incident in *Athabaskan*. Interview with Dick Berg, Unionville, Ontario, 10 October 1998.

CANGENs 30 and 54,⁹⁶ had animated much mess deck discussion over the previous weeks, and now the men had several items they wished to discuss with the Commander, mostly with respect to ship's routine and the wearing of higher orders of uniform for work details. Somehow, each side misinterpreted the intentions of the other and, despite the greater "regulating" presence in the cruiser, the men proceeded to their mess decks, locking the doors behind them. The Mainguy Report puts the number of protesters at 50; one of the men involved, Able Seaman Dick Berg, is certain that practically the entire complement of junior hands - nearly 300 men - had joined in. In the process, they added another demand to their list of grievances: removal of the Executive Officer.

Captain Hibbard reacted quickly. So that no technical state of mutiny would develop, instead of ordering "Out pipes" Hibbard at first addressed the ship's company over the loud-speaker broadcast system. His remarks are not recorded, but he was sufficiently reassuring that when he eventually did order "Clear lower decks", the men responded by reporting to duty. Within days, Brock was transferred to another ship. That move was undertaken with the concurrence of the Flag Officer Pacific Coast, Admiral Mainguy, who two years later would magnanimously admit, "In retrospect the speed of his transfer, without a complete investigation, appears to have been neither completely wise nor completely fair."⁹⁷ But with the immediate problem resolved, the Naval Staff could return to the more important task of dealing with the underlying issues.

⁹⁶ NSHQ signals, "CANGEN 30" [Firmer Substantiation of Requests for Release], 122123Z/June/1947, and "CANGEN 54" [Welfare Committees], 281445Z/July/1947, *op. cit.*

⁹⁷ The Mainguy Report, p. 31.

Chapter 7: Too Many Chiefs and Not Enough Seamen

The year 1949 is remembered as the one of crisis and reform in the Royal Canadian Navy. The mutinous incidents in *Athabaskan*, *Crescent* and *Magnificent* seized the attention of a government and a nation growing sensitive to the spread of communist subversion. Over the span of a few short months, the Commission of Inquiry established by the Minister of National Defence heard testimony from 238 witnesses in all. “who ranged from the Admiral in Command to some of the most recent ‘new entries’.”¹ The commissioners presented their deliberations in November 1949 in a volume famous henceforth as The Mainguy Report. Its trim length of 57 pages notwithstanding, it remained for nearly 50 years the most incisive examination of a military institution to be undertaken in Canada. It exposed the hardship of general service conditions, described a number of factors critical to achieving good officer-man relations, and outlined a blueprint for reform. Its impact was immediate, and it deserves its description as “a remarkable manifesto” and “a watershed in the Navy’s history”.² Still taught to new recruits of all ranks, and the continuing subject of staff college analysis, its findings, recommendations and conclusions remain a potent legacy.³

¹ The Mainguy Report, p. 6.

² Bishop, “Save Our Navy,” p. 132; and, German, The Sea is at Our Gates, p. 211.

³ See, for example, LCdr William A. Woodburn, “The Mainguy Report: A Canadian Sternmark for the 21st Century” (unpublished Canadian Forces Command and Staff College, New Horizons Paper, 2 May 1997).

Regrettably, that legacy for the most part is negative, and some of it can be shown to be mistaken. HMCS *Crescent* was one of those “mutinous” ships. The details of the unfolding of events at Nanking on the day of 15 March 1949 are as recorded in The Mainguy Report. The rest of her experience, however, is at such odds with the description of the fleet offered therein as to demand a re-assessment of the underlying issues. While the incident in *Crescent* was a spontaneous explosion, different in certain important respects from the trouble of 1947, it must be seen against the context of the tradition of mass protest in the Royal Canadian Navy - and the continuing attempts of Naval Service Headquarters to come to grips with the unrest. This chapter explores an alternative explanation for the “incidents” of 1949. The broader institutional context in which they occurred, although of immense consequence to the world of the ordinary seaman, was something beyond his ken. Bringing the perspective of the waterfront to the high-level analysis of the Mainguy Commission rationalizes the differing viewpoints, and indicates that there was more to that institutional context than was understood even by the commissioners or, for that matter, NSHQ. Rather than narrowing the focus further, *Crescent’s* experience offers further insight into the problems plaguing the postwar RCN.

• • •

It is an understatement to record that, when The Mainguy Report was unveiled, it was not immediately embraced by the RCN officer corps. The Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Grant, was known to have been outraged at it; rumours persist that even Admiral Mainguy, when he became CNS, attempted to have the copies in general circulation recalled. This sentiment was not confined to the senior ranks. Junior officers who had

served through the postwar period felt “a certain element of resentment” at its tone and content.⁴ While not all will still claim they “didn’t like it one bit”⁵ (and even these have come over the years to accept the wisdom of the report’s recommendations), generally, the more experience one had serving in the postwar fleet, the less enthusiastic was the reaction to The Mainguy Report. Sensing the controversy they were about to unleash, the commissioners themselves felt moved to temper their remarks:

We were asked to find out what was wrong with the Navy. If, therefore, we have stressed what is wrong, it should not be forgotten that a great deal is overwhelmingly right. The fact that men and officers are restless, and constructively critical, is a welcome sign of national convalescence, and a bright promise of naval and national health and well-being.⁶

Virtually from the moment of its publication, that five-line caveat has been lost in the passion which attended the rest of the report. We have indeed forgotten that a great deal was right in the postwar fleet, and are left instead with a litany of “General Causes Contributing to [the] Breakdown of Discipline.” If the commissioners found no organized or subversive influences at work in the naval service, they identified such systemic problems as the breakdown of the Divisional System⁷ of personnel management (which they attributed to lack of training and experience of junior officers), frequent changes in ships’ manning and routines with inadequate explanation, a deterioration in

⁴ Hennessy interview.

⁵ Interview with author, Captain Pat Ryan, Ottawa, 24 February 1999.

⁶ The Mainguy Report, p. 7.

⁷ KRCN art 1.02 (xv) provides: “‘division’ of a ship or fleet establishment refers to the sections into which men serving in the ship or fleet establishment may be divided for purposes of discipline and to facilitate the training and welfare of the men.”

the traditional relationship between officers and petty officers, and the absence of a distinguishing Canadian identity in the Navy. They laid special emphasis upon the failure in each of the affected ships to provide functioning Welfare Committees, as prescribed by naval regulations, to allow the airing and correction of petty grievances.⁸ They noted also an “artificial distance between officers and men,” with the clear implication that this was the result of Canadian midshipmen obtaining their early practical experience in the big ships of the Royal Navy.⁹

There are, in all of this, many universal truths. None of it, however, should be the stuff of inspiration to mutiny, even in its restrained Canadian form. Just as naval historians have demonstrated that “mutinous acts remain fundamentally loyal to the *status quo* of the service.”¹⁰ labour history shows that workers tend to strike not to gain some new right, but to recover something lost or threatened. This certainly was the case in the series of strikes by the communist-dominated Canadian Seaman’s Union (CSU) through

⁸ As ordered in message NSHQ, CANGEN 54, 281445Z/July/1947, and reproduced in The Mainguy Report, p. 26, Welfare Committees were introduced:

...with the object of providing machinery for free discussion between officers and men of items of welfare and general amenities within the ship or establishment that lie within the powers of decision held by the Captain or his immediate Administrative Authority [ie, the Executive Officer]. ... They will not repetition not be entitled to discuss questions of welfare or amenity outside the ship nor will they be entitled to deal with conditions of service, e.g., discipline, pay, allowances, leave scales, etc.

Committees were to comprise the XO as chairman and representative of the Wardroom, the Supply Officer as secretary, and elected representatives from each of the lower deck messes.

⁹ The Mainguy Report, pp. 32, 37, and *passim*.

¹⁰ Archambault, p. ii.

1946, 1947 and 1948, and which the Liberal government perceived as the model for discord in the RCN. Indeed, trouble in the merchant marine flared again in April 1949 just as the Mainguy Commission prepared to sit. But where the CSU was fighting for better pay and benefits for its members, and against efforts by the shipping companies (in loose combination with rival unionists and even the government) to break the union,¹¹ in the Canadian naval incidents, as Groos pointed out to Audette, "It will be noted that three [conditions] previously considered as all-important - food, pay and leave - are not mentioned. They are eminently satisfactory in the RCN."¹²

What was the *status quo* in the RCN in 1949? How was it different from that of 1947, and what had occurred to upset it? What promised conditions of service had failed to be delivered? What had been lost or threatened that the sailors felt compelled to recover through mass insubordination? The Mainguy Report missed the mark on several counts on the make-up and identity of the postwar RCN. What other points did it fail to appreciate?

The report devoted some considerable space to criticism of a propagandistic recruiting system in which "Travel and adventure, education, good pay, pensions and a number of comforts were overstressed and the hardships of the sea, the manliness of service and the appeal of practical patriotism are rarely, if ever, mentioned"¹³ (see **Figure**

¹¹ Kaplan, Everything that Floats, pp. 41-71, *passim*; and Green, Against the Tide, pp. 128-284, *passim*.

¹² "Report from sea.," *op. cit.*, attached to Groos to Audette, 15 April 1949.

¹³ The Mainguy Report, p. 35.

37). Otherwise, it is silent or vague on matters of substance. Reading the report and the volumes of testimony from which it was prepared, one is struck, as were the Commissioners, by the banality of the men's grievances and their difficulties in articulating them.¹⁴ Neither the absence of Welfare Committees nor the men's lack of higher education can fully account for the acts of indiscipline or the men's poor attempts at



Figure 37 : RCN postwar recruiting poster, courtesy of The Canadian War Museum.

¹⁴ Audette Papers, vol 13-1, "Random Thoughts on Various Subjects Connected with the Inquiry into the Recent Incidents in H.M.C. Ships," [n.d.], p. 1; and, Audette's handwritten commentary throughout the transcripts on the character and credibility of each witness. See also Audette, "The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report," p. 248.

explaining their actions.¹⁵ The spontaneous nature of the incidents and the lack of coordination point to other discrepancies which serve also to distance the Canadian actions in degree from their British antecedents. If the motives for dissension were as widespread as the Commission implied, the wonder is not that three ships mutinied in 1949, but why did the rest of the fleet not.

• • •

For all of the attention devoted to The Mainguy Report, it has never been subjected to rigorous analysis. Two important considerations have been overlooked: firstly, the otherwise common acceptance that officially sanctioned Commissions of Inquiry obfuscate as much as they expose; and, secondly, the general condemnation with which naval officers of all ranks greeted the publication of the report. Not all of these latter misgivings can be dismissed as the rantings of men feeling too personally the sting of its findings. Even a cursory critical review reveals a number of problems with The Mainguy Report. It is an old naval tradition that warships enter and leave harbour in order of the seniority of their commanding officers, but extension of this principle to

¹⁵ Dick Berg to author, 4 April 1999, offers a further inhibition on the men's testimony. The assurances of the commissioners notwithstanding,

... I believe one has to consider the circumstances under which evidence was given to ships personnel without the benefit of legal counsel or any idea what [was] the procedure or areas the Commissioners would address. There obviously would be reluctance by a person fully describing the details of an officer's actions and reactions, as well as what had actually occurred in fear of retribution.... Further, the system of selecting personnel... by lot... was never explained to me. I was ordered to appear before the Commission without any knowledge of how I had been selected and I had not volunteered to appear at any time. I found appearing before the Commissioners very intimidating.

discussion in the report of the incidents in order of *Magnificent*, *Athabaskan* and lastly *Crescent* confounds the facts of their timing and nature. Those in the destroyers occurred first and in isolation, extended for a period of some hours, and involved a large portion of the lower deck complement; that in the carrier was conducted with foreknowledge of the other events, and was only a half-hearted effort on the part of a particular (and small) group in the ship, the Aircraft Handlers. Not enough was made of the conditions unique to that larger vessel; in particular, no mention was made of the depth of ill-feeling between the Executive Officer and the Commander of the Air Department, despite much testimony pointing to that as the cause. Exempting the incident in the carrier, however, raises a different question: why was the trouble seemingly restricted to the destroyers of the Pacific Squadron?

Part of the bias in the report quite naturally arose from the characters of the three men appointed to the Commission. The chairman, Rear-Admiral Rollo Mainguy, was Flag Officer Atlantic Coast (FOAC) with *Magnificent* under his command; he was heir-apparent to the position of Chief of Naval Staff (and would be appointed same on 1 December 1951). Louis de la Chesnaye Audette was an Ottawa lawyer and a lifelong Liberal. He also was a retired officer of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, his service during the war having included command of the corvette *Amherst* and the frigate *Coaticook*, and he was a member of the Maritime Commission; perhaps because of his own connections (his family was of old seigneurial stock), he was known to dislike the false country club pretenses of the RCN. Leonard Brockington, first chairman of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (1936-39), ostensibly was the impartial observer; he

was a confidant of Mackenzie King and had recently chaired a separate Commission of Inquiry in 1947 into the strikes which had plagued the Canadian Merchant Marine. All three prided themselves as “people” people capable of striking a chord with those



Figure 38: VAdm Rollo Mainguy (by then, CNS) sharing a coffee in the Seaman’s Mess on board HMCS *Athabaskan*, 17 February 1953 (CFPU, PMR 98-151).

in lower stations of life. Mainguy (see **Figure 38**) had become famous throughout the navy when, first as Captain(D) in Newfoundland, he had established the Crow’snest club for officers and recreation facilities for the ratings; later, as captain of the cruiser *Uganda* in the Pacific, he had instituted the practice - often referred to positively during Commission testimony - of holding “town hall” meetings of the ship’s company to discuss various issues. While commanding ships out of St John’s, Audette was recognized by his superiors (who had included both Mainguy and Grant) for the care and attention he paid to his ship’s company.¹⁶ Brockington’s report on trouble in the merchant marine was sympathetic to the Canadian Seaman’s Union.¹⁷ For all this, they remained “high-level”

¹⁶ Audette Papers, vol 14-5, Miscellaneous Personal Papers, Service Certificates, *passim*.

¹⁷ Kaplan, Everything that Floats, p. 50.

people. Each was eminently qualified to sit on the commission, but each had his own perspective on getting to the root of the malaise.¹⁸

Another part of the problem was inherent in the very nature of the report. To begin with, the commissioners were charged “to find out and record what happened on the occasion of each of the incidents of alleged mass insubordination which occurred in the three ships concerned.”¹⁹ If the malaise was indeed widespread and systemic, this was automatically too narrow a focus. Although staff officers from Naval Service Headquarters and the coastal commands were called as witnesses, no testimony was heard either from ships which had not reported trouble or from ratings in shore establishments. Then, there was the unwritten presumption that the incidents stemmed primarily from a breakdown in the relationship between officers and ratings. This is implicit throughout the record of testimony, The Mainguy Report itself, and reflections upon the process by one of the commissioners 35 years later.²⁰ Together, these preoccupations with respect to cause and effect predisposed the commissioners against contrary indications. To take partial, focussed evidence, and to extrapolate that across the service, necessarily would skew conclusions. To disregard or take out of context other portions of that evidence actually received was to do so purposefully.

¹⁸ Audette, “The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report,” pp. 240-241, speaks glowingly of the personal qualities of Mainguy and Brockington. From a short but profitable acquaintance with Audette in his later years, this author can attest to the same in him.

¹⁹ The Mainguy Report, p. 5.

²⁰ Audette, “The Lower Deck and the Mainguy Report,” pp. 235-249, *passim*.

The commissioners blithely acknowledged how the Navy had “grown and shrunk in a manner unparalleled”, and asserted that the “stresses and strains... accompanying... every such process... need no verbal comment”. They then proceeded to detail the breakdown of the Royal Canadian Navy in the late winter of 1949. Those incidents were, indeed, at once spontaneous and the product of years of frustration, but not precisely in the way described in the report. The RCN did not suddenly drop at that moment to the bottom of the pit, although one gains quite the opposite impression from The Mainguy Report. It makes no reference to the depth of discontent throughout the fleet in 1947, and allows only brief mention of the incident in the cruiser *Ontario*, which it treats as an isolated event, attributed to the character of the Executive Officer and significant only because the participants were later spread amongst other ships. That was not the case. It was part of a pattern well known by all ranks throughout the fleet, and which had sparked an internal investigation in the fall of 1947. NSHQ was occupied throughout 1948 in large part with implementing the findings of that original inquest into “Morale and Service Conditions.” Senior officers were incensed at the Commission’s report in 1949, not necessarily for the broad sweep of its accusations - many of which were self-evident - but for its misrepresentation in the detail of the problems, and the implication that the Navy had been willfully ignorant of them and negligent in discerning solutions.

Especially galling was the observation:

Most of the unsatisfactory conditions have been known to naval authorities for three years or more. It can be recorded that some of the recommendations which we propose have already been the subject of reforming action between the date of the sitting of our Board and the presentation of our report. Most of this prevision is intelligent

anticipation; even if some of it is a pleasant coincidence, it is none the less welcome.²¹

Whatever the insight of many of the pronouncements in The Mainguy Report, it was not an accurate depiction of either the fleet as it existed in 1949, or of the efforts of the Naval Staff to address the many problems with which it had been plagued.

• * *

In mid-September 1947, the Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral Houghton, began to receive the analyses of his Directors on what they felt to be the ails of the fleet, and their thoughts as to solutions. Blending their submissions with that of Captain Hibbard from *Ontario*, and condensing them into 26 recommendations, he passed these to the CNS on 29 September 1947, in a 22 page paper entitled "The Morale of the Navy."²² Houghton discussed each of his observations in some depth, and his subsequent recommendations covered the whole scope of problems which had been reported from the fleet, plus many others. They ranged from the necessity for adequate married quarters, through better pay to be made more equitable amongst the various trades and branches, to films to be shown at sea, the start-up of a "Lower Deck magazine", the standardization of new entry training, the Canadianization of officer training, and the better application of the Divisional System. They are too lengthy to reproduce in full at this point, but it is important to recognize that a great number of the failings and recommendations noted later in The Mainguy Report had appeared previously in Houghton's report - with a great

²¹ The Mainguy Report, pp. 33-34.

²² NSS 4490-1, "The Morale of the Navy," VCNS to CNS, 29 September 1947.

number already having been acted upon or at least having received some attention - some two full years before the fall of 1949 (see Appendix 4 for a comparative listing of the recommendations from the two reports). Those recommendations appearing as new in The Mainguy Report can be seen as having been contingent - not unlike a version of Maslow's famous "hierarchy of needs" - upon earlier problems having been set right.

Harold Grant had only just been promoted Vice-Admiral and appointed as Chief of the Naval Staff upon the retirement of Admiral H.E. Reid, effective 1 September 1947. It thus came to pass that one of Grant's first major acts as CNS was to deal with Houghton's Morale Study. He compressed it into three tightly crafted pages, which he brought, in his turn, to the Minister "by hand" on 9 October 1947. His opening paragraphs were designed to focus Brooke Claxton's attention on the magnitude of the problems besetting the Naval Service:

The years immediately following war have always been particularly unsettling to Service personnel for a multitude of reasons..., but... a reasonable degree of contentment with Service conditions should exist, after two years of peace.

That this degree of satisfaction with Service life is seriously retarded [in the RCN] there is no doubt and I personally consider it of utmost importance to improve the morale of the Navy before any significant progress in numbers or efficiency can be expected.

As evidence of the current unpopularity of life afloat, one has only to compare the number of discharges and desertions over the last quarter [Summer 1947] with the number of new entries, i.e., 231 discharged, 92 desertions, and 230 entries".²³

Grant reduced the factors undermining morale in the fleet to four main items: pay, service accommodation, married quarters, and travel warrants. For each of these, he advised

²³ NSS 4490-1, "Morale - Royal Canadian Navy," CNS to Minister, 8 October 1947 [annotated "To Minister by Hand, AM 9/10/47"].

Claxton of the “remedial action taken or contemplated”. Noting that “the new [1946] rates of pay... were based on prevailing commercial rates..., [and] since they were introduced the cost of living has increased and civilian pay has generally been raised...”, the CNS felt it was imperative to re-convene a special committee on pay and allowances for the three Services. That, however, would not completely resolve certain problems unique to the Navy:

When and if this committee sits, or in fact even should it not do so, it will be essential to re-examine the trade group structure as applicable to the Navy.

Under this system there exists the anomaly of a Seaman Chief Petty Officer, skilled in the art of seamanship and command, and with his experience the very backbone of life afloat, earning less money and unable to reach the same rank as an artificer who, though skilled in his trade, has a very isolated value to the Navy as a whole.

Moving on, he declared the “existing [barrack] accommodation at both Halifax and Esquimalt is sub-standard.” He reminded the Minister,

You have approved plans which authorize conversions [of wartime buildings] in the interests of the men’s comfort, but this is purely a temporary measure... [and] construction of up-to-date, modern and attractive permanent barracks is essential. ... [I]t is intended to include construction costs... in the 1948-49 estimates.

Improving living conditions in ships was hampered by the fact that every vessel in the fleet had been built during the war “with utility fittings”. The only exception was the aircraft carrier *Magnificent*, which was scheduled to be accepted in March 1948, in replacement of *Warrior*. As a consequence,

Any major improvement in living conditions afloat is dependent on new construction and serious consideration must be given to the procurement of ships of American design if we are ever to reach the standard of comfort found in the US Navy afloat.

Grant noted that his service had been precluded from the Departmental building programme of married quarters. Those for the Army and RCAF were intended for isolated locations, posing a special problem for the Navy:

...since both main shore establishments are in urban districts. The families of married men are therefore called upon to live in crowded and unsatisfactory rented accommodation at exorbitant prices. Many wives refuse to live in either Esquimalt or Halifax under these conditions.

The consequent pressure to return home on long leave imposed an additional financial burden upon sailors. Again the CNS reminded his Minister, "You are already aware of the hardship which has been caused by the abolition of reduced railway fares...." The tri-service Personnel Members Committee had examined the problem, but Grant was not confident of it coming before Defence Council, because it was yet another problem unique to the Navy. Soldiers and airmen had a chance of being posted relatively close to their homes, at one of the many Army and RCAF stations across the country. For Grant's sailors, however,

Because of the geographical location of our two main establishments and the conditions of service peculiar to the Navy, the withdrawal of travel concessions has been represented by the lower deck as one of their major grievances.

A quick review might lead to the conclusion that Grant had studiously avoided discussion of the leadership failings of the RCN officer corps which Houghton had underlined and which would animate The Mainguy Report. He did admit that there were other factors "contributing to unrest":

Amongst them I would class a current lack of appreciation of the men's troubles by junior officers who have entered the Service after a very brief war time training afloat. Most of these officers, in an endeavour to learn

the rudiments of seamanship and life afloat simply had not time to study or know his men's problems, and is the reason why all maritime nations consider it essential to train their officers afloat at a young age.

Surely, part of Grant's motivation in not addressing the staff recommendations on more effective application of the Divisional System and on Canadianization of training must have been his inclination to see nothing wrong with the system of organization and training inherited from the Royal Navy, in which he, like all other senior Canadian naval officers, had spent his formative years, to no observable ill. However, to be fair, it also was a simple reflection of the state of the RCN at the time. The CNS saw that his fleet was too small to offer any alternative but to continue officer and specialist training with the Royal Navy. Neither did he see any point in bureaucratizing further the Divisional System, which already was described in the King's Regulations for the RCN. In the final analysis, moreover, the training and administration of the Naval Service were matters within Grant's control. His purpose in describing to the Minister the factors which he did was simple: Claxton controlled the money to make them right, and had the political power to effect changes. In that latter regard, the last passage quoted above should be seen, not so much as a slap at the VR officers Grant desperately needed to implement the interim force, but rather as an effort to forestall the demise of *Royal Roads* as a naval college. Claxton already had forced Admiral Reid, the previous CNS, to amalgamate that establishment as the RCN-RCAF College, and now was pushing a further "[re-] orientation of *Royal Roads* as a first step to a tri-service approach to officer education and training."²⁴

²⁴ March, "The Evolution of a College," p. 115 and *passim*.

Claxton's comments are not recorded on any file. The progress made in resolving the issues identified by his Chief of the Naval Service, nonetheless, serves as a gauge of the Minister's support (or more properly, lack thereof) for eliminating the grounds of discontent in the RCN. Examining the issues in reverse order gives them the priority for action intended by Grant. Travel warrants for leave, although "a major grievance", were never to be seen again in the Canadian forces. Exactly six married quarters would be built for the RCN in the 1948-49 construction period, out of a total of 766 for all three services: the 1949-50 period would see a major increase of 272 married quarters built for the Navy, but these were a minor expenditure compared to the 696 completed for the Army and 692 for the RCAF, and still none of them were in Halifax or Esquimalt (most were for the naval air station at Dartmouth, and for remote radio stations). It would not be until the 1951-52 and 1952-53 construction periods that significant numbers would be built in Halifax (521) or Esquimalt (351), although even these efforts continued to pale in comparison to construction for the other services.²⁵ Similarly, funds for "modern and attractive permanent barracks" were not included in the final estimates for 1948-49, and such buildings would not be seen in Halifax and Esquimalt until late in 1953, built then as part of the Cold War expansion of the early-1950s.²⁶ A general increase in pay is the only issue which received immediate ministerial attention in the fall of 1947, but one is

²⁵ DND Annual Reports, 1949 through 1953 [inclusive], Appendix - "Detailed Statement Showing Location of Permanent Married Quarters Completed During [the Period] by Services." The emphasis in married quarter construction continued to be for isolated stations, of which the Army and RCAF had many more, but took no regard of the crowded urban conditions of either Halifax or Esquimalt.

²⁶ DND Annual Report (1954), p. 39.

left to wonder if the RCN would have gained any relief in this respect had it not been for the imperatives of tri-service equality.

Effectively, Grant was left to his own devices. Within the strictures of his budget and the physical capacity of the small staff at Naval Service Headquarters, he moved swiftly and effectively. Apparently simple and random actions, such as the appointment of Commander H.F. Pullen as captain of *Nootka*, had an immediate and positive effect in turning around that troubled ship.²⁷ In a similarly inspired move, the plans developed in the course of 1948 to re-open HMCS *Cornwallis* as a dedicated new entry training centre featured the appointment as Executive Officer of the demanding but popular Commander P.D. Budge (who had replaced Brock in *Ontario*); the Commanding Officer would be Captain A.P. Musgrave, who had become a specialist in the area of training since commissioning HMCS *St Hyacinthe* (the RCN Communications School) in 1941. When circumstances permitted a modest expansion of NSHQ early in 1949, another officer noted for his sensitivity to the needs of the lower deck, Commander A.F. Pickard, would be appointed Director of Service Conditions and Welfare. The number of ratings commissioned from the ranks rose dramatically through 1948 (among them Gunner Scott would be appointed to *Crescent*), and many more promising individuals were selected for the necessary qualifying training (these included then-Leading Seaman Max Reid).²⁸ As for junior officer training, *Crescent* had embarked Naval College cadets for short cruises

²⁷ Interview, Max Reid.

²⁸ The Navy List, 1949; and personnel database. "RCN Officers, January 1949."

at regular intervals throughout 1946 and 1947.²⁹ Now, firmer Canadianizing steps were taken when 40 cadets from *Royal Roads* were embarked in *Ontario* for the Spring Cruise of 1948.³⁰

The more physical aspects of creature comfort also received attention. In the fall of 1947, when the Naval Staff looked at which one of the several destroyers held in reserve should be re-commissioned, the deciding factors were those “which might have a bearing on morale through superior accommodation.”³¹ The “V”-class destroyer thus selected was *Sioux*, and her preparatory refit was mandated to include cafeteria-style messing and the fitting of bunks (see **Figure 39**). Sailors in the *Tribals* would sleep in hammocks until those ships were retired in



Figure 39: Stoker’s Mess, HMCS *Crescent*, after modernization (CFPU PMR 98-131). Compare to the conditions in **Figure 30** and **Figure 38**.

the 1960s (*Haida* survives as a museum ship in Toronto harbour), but the planning begun early in 1948 for construction of a new class of destroyer-escort took these

²⁹ *Crescent*, “Reports of Proceedings,” 1946-48, *passim*.

³⁰ “History of HMCS *Ontario*,” p. 19.

³¹ NSS 1650-26, part 2, DNPI [Lay] to DNC, “Manning Priorities - Ships Held in Reserve,” 17 September 1947; and DNC to DNPI, “C- and V-Class Destroyers Comparison of Habitability,” 4 October 1947.

accommodation factors as basic design requirements, even though all other questions of machinery and weapons remained open to discussion.³²

The Naval Personnel Branch was pre-occupied through 1948 with its own major initiatives. The publishing of a "Lower Deck Magazine" became a priority for the Director of Naval Information, and Crowsnest was immediately popular in the fleet when it appeared in the fall of 1948. It was glossy and attractively designed, with lots of chatty stories about the happenings of sailors and the ships of the fleet, but most importantly it contained good solid information. The second issue carried details of "The New Advancement Ladder" for ratings in the RCN,³³ which was the fulfilment of Admiral Grant's promise "to re-examine the trade group structure as applicable to the Navy".

Even without any progress on the basic issues of travel warrants and accommodation, the impact of the pay raise in October 1947 and Grant's other reforms was immediate (refer also to Appendix 4 for a summary of action on Houghton's recommendations). In April 1948, the quarterly report on desertions detailed totals of 23 "run" and 41 "recovered" in the previous three months, leading the Naval Secretary to gush:

Desertions during the quarter were the lowest to date, and recoveries are again considerably in excess of desertions; a similar situation obtains in the Army and RCAF. It is considered that desertions have now reached a figure which can be considered "normal" and this summary will no longer be issued.³⁴

³² Mathwin Davis, "The *St Laurent* Decision," pp. 198-199.

³³ "The New Advancement Ladder," Crowsnest, vol 1 no 2 (December 1948), pp. 14-15.

³⁴ NSS 4260-1, Naval Secretary to distribution list, 6 April 1948.

At the same time, there also came an end to the number of releases by men who had been recruited into the permanent force for seven-year engagements under questionable premises in 1940-41. This all made for a dramatic decline in the wastage rate: despite the net losses at some points in 1947, by 31 March 1948, the strength of the RCN was 1137 officers and 5796 men (total, 6857). In September of that year, Commander Hennessy (the former captain of *Micmac*, but now in the capacity of Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel) reported that with wastage down and intake healthy “[even] without a recruiting drive [we] should therefore be up to [the 10,000-man] strength within 2 years”.³⁵ By April 1949, as the St Laurent government quietly allowed the ceiling on recruiting to lapse, the strength had risen to 8154 (see table and chart, “RCN Strength, 1939-1955.” in Appendix 2). It is not possible to determine the distribution by rank within the lower deck, but the fact that none of the NSHQ files complained in 1948 of a surplus of chiefs and petty officers can be taken as an indication of that problem finally having been resolved. Most importantly, there do not appear to have been any incidents of mass insubordination in the Canadian fleet in 1948.

These developments were not the signs of a service in distress, as the RCN had been in the summer of 1947. With the increases in strength, it was possible to bring additional ships into service. The last two Canadian-built *Tribals*, *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan (II)*, were commissioned respectively in October 1947 and January 1948; *Warrior* was replaced by the slightly larger *Magnificent* in April; *Micmac* was re-commissioned in November 1948; and two frigates came to be manned on a regular basis

³⁵ NSS 4600-1, ACNP to CNP, minute, 16 September 1948.

(see Appendix 3). The commissioning of *Magnificent* was significant also in that she had been "arcticized" - living on board the carrier might still be unbearable in the tropics, but at least with the fitting of steam heating the ship would be able to winter at Halifax. Taken together, these various factors made it possible for the Naval Staff to plan and actually execute increasingly more ambitious training cruises: in the fall of 1948, *Magnificent* was accompanied by the destroyers *Nootka* and *Haida* on a cruise into Hudson Bay, the first foray of the RCN into the Arctic; and on the west coast, an "RCN task force" (as it was described in Crowsnest³⁶), comprising the cruiser *Ontario*, destroyers *Cayuga*, *Athabaskan* and *Crescent*, and frigate *Antigonish*, conducted exercises in the Hawaiian training areas of the US Navy. With effective training now beginning to address the operational readiness of the fleet, there remained only one major recommendation of the Morale Study to implement. The fruits of the labour of "The Committee on Advancement & Conditions of Service - New Substantive Rating Structure" called for nothing less than the fundamental re-organization of the entire rank and trade group structure of the lower deck of the RCN.³⁷ This was "The New Advancement Ladder" described in Crowsnest. It would have a direct bearing on every rating in the Navy, and it was to come into effect early in 1949.

Although they were critical elements in the evolution of the postwar Royal Canadian Navy, neither the Morale and Service Conditions study of 1947 nor the work

³⁶ Crowsnest, vol 1 no 2 (December 1948), pp. 4-5. The previous issue, *ibid.*, vol 1 no 1 (November 1948), pp. 4-5, had covered the Arctic cruise of the east coast flotilla.

³⁷ NSS 1279-17, *passim*. This file is dedicated to the work of the committee, also known as the Peers Committee, after its chairman, Acting Captain A.F. Peers.

through 1948 of the Rank and Trade Group Restructuring Committee figured in The Mainguy Report. For fifty years, the files recording their activities lay unread, slowly yellowing in dusty archival storage, until research into the social composition of the ship's company of HMCS *Crescent*, based upon the nominal roll prepared the week after the mutiny in that ship, revealed fundamental inconsistencies in the structure of that ship's company. In 1946, the Complement Committee had determined the rank and trade composition which could most efficiently man that class of ship in either a training or an operational role. Despite the pressures of the previous three years, that basic structure had held up well. The make-up of the lower deck which mutinied while alongside in Nanking, China, on the morning of 15 March 1949, however, was profoundly at odds with that established complement.

* * *

Why is it that *Crescent* did not figure in the RCN's spring and summer of discontent? Aside from the trouble in *Ontario* in August 1947, west coast ships and establishments do not seem to have been plagued by desertions to anywhere near the level as those on the east coast, and *Crescent*'s tally of probably only a dozen deserters over the period August 1946 to March 1948 for which figures exist³⁸ was a small portion even of those. One possibility is that, although the ship's routine, with the emphasis on individual training, was little different from that of the other destroyers in the fleet, *Crescent* at least had the influx of cadets from *Royal Roads* at regular intervals to bring

³⁸ NSS 4260-1, *op. cit.* The figures for July-September 1947 were not broken down by ship and branch.

some predictability to her programme and perhaps to inspire some altruism amongst her sailors. And then there must be something to the fortune of being stationed on the west coast. From the personal experience of this author, the islands and fiords that make the Inside Passage such a profitable training area also are far more effective at encouraging solace than the foggy grey seas of the Grand Banks.

Perhaps the explanation is as simple as the fact that

Crescent enjoyed a

fortuitous break in routine provided by an annual docking through the spring of 1947, at the apparent height of the unrest (see **Figure 40**).

The ship certainly was blessed by a succession of popular commanding officers, in the persons of Lieutenant-Commanders Pat Nixon (from commissioning through December 1946), J.C. “Scruffy” O’Brien (to January 1948), John Charles (to November 1948), and including David Groos. All had successful commands during the war, and had been highly regarded by superiors and juniors alike, which was a major factor in their selection for command of the west coast training destroyer. Two (O’Brien and Charles)

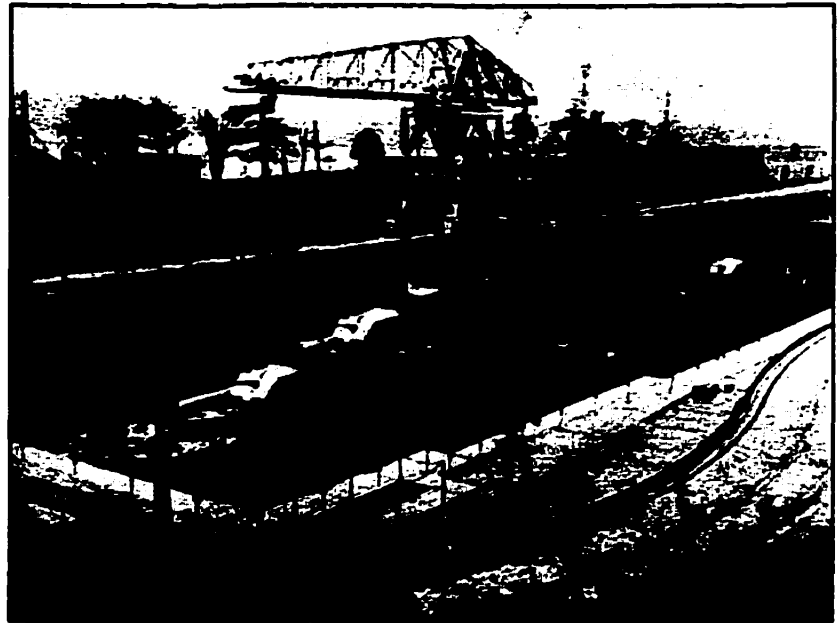


Figure 40: HMCS *Crescent* in the Esquimalt graving dock, December 1946. Note the maple leaf on the funnel (visible also in the original on that of the cruiser [probably *Ontario*]) in the background) (CFPU, PMR 83336).

SHIP	YEAR	CO	ENTRY	XO	ENTRY
CRESCENT	1945-6	C.P. Nixon	RCN (Pre-war)	D.M. Waters	RCN (Pre-war)
	1947	J.C. O'Brien	RCN (Pre-war)	M.O. Jones	RCNVR (IF)
	1948	J.A. Charles	RCN (Pre-war)	R.H. Sylvester	RCNVR (IF)
	1949	D.W. Groos	RCN (Pre-war)	G.R. Wood	RCNVR (IF)
MICMAC	1946	R.L. Hennessy	RCN (Pre-war)	S.L. Slade	RCNVR (W)
	1947	J.C. Littler	RCNR	J.G. Mills	RCNVR (IF)
	1948	[refit]		[refit]	
	1949	[refit]		[refit]	
NOOTKA	1946	H.S. Rayner	RCN (Pre-war)	L.P. McCormack	RCNVR (IF)
	1947	M.G. Stirling	RCN (Pre-war)	"	"
	1948	H.F. Pullen	RCN (Pre-war)	M.J.A.T. Jette	RCNVR (W)
	1949	A.H.G. Storrs	RNR/RCNR	D.L. Macknight	RCNVR (IF)
HAIDA	1947	F.B. Caldwell	RCN (Pre-war)	I.B.B. Morrow	RCNR
	1948	A.F. Pickard	RCNR	W. Bremner	RCNVR (IF)
	1949	E.T.G. Madgwick	RCN (Pre-war)	"	"
ATHABASKAN	1948	J.S. Davis	RCNVR (IF)	D.R. Smythies	RCNVR (IF)
	1949	M.A. Medland	RCN (Pre-war)	C.R. Parker	RCNVR (IF)
CAYUGA	1948	O.C.S Robertson	RCNR	L.B. Jenson	RCN (Pre-war)

Figure 41: RCN Postwar Destroyer Commanding and Executive Officers (with method of entry), 1946-49.

would go on to flag rank; the other two were just as qualified, but resigned their commissions early (having achieved the rank of captain) to pursue other interests. Not as much is known of the Executive Officers who assisted them. As a group, they did not deviate appreciably from the fleet-wide trend of placing former Volunteer Reservists in the role as a training opportunity (the exception to this was *Crescent's* first XO, who had been appointed while the war was still in progress) (see **Figure 41**). The Mainguy Report would comment that "the selection of Captains and Executive Officers has not always been as careful as it should have been."³⁹ Although not mentioned by name, Gerry Wood received special attention:

³⁹ The Mainguy Report, p. 39.

With a sincere wish to be fair to the conscientious and hard-working Executive Officer of *Crescent*, we cannot but feel that his selection for his difficult task without prior experience, was haphazard, casual and unwise.⁴⁰

But the point is, attention was being paid. The Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel, Captain K.F. Adams, responsible for senior officer appointments, was juggling a variety of personal qualities in the placing of officers: age, experience, availability, and career progression. By 1949, there was a growing pool of officers who needed to be "posted or perish", and in the training environment in which the RCN was operating, Adams's appointments were entirely rational. Many responded well, some did not. No one in NSHQ - not even the CNS - expected a Canadian warship with a training complement to be despatched on only a few days' notice to an active theatre, with all the special demands that entailed.

One of Houghton's recommendations which did not get properly addressed through 1948 was the destabilizing rate of turnover in ship's companies. In his report of proceedings for August 1946, on the first anniversary of *Crescent's* commissioning, Commander Nixon observed that "the following statistics on the complement changes during the past year may be of interest":

- (1) A total of 51 officers and 532 men have been borne on the ship's book as part of complement during this period.
- (2) Of the 16 officers and 184 men who originally commissioned the ship only the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer, Gunner and eight men still remain.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

(3) An additional 25 officers, 104 naval cadets, approximately 450 men and 46 sea cadets have been borne for training at various times.⁴¹

By 1949, the situation had scarcely changed. In addition to the 25 men embarked on 28 January from *Ontario*, 63 ratings had joined *Crescent* since she had last sailed in November 1948; and at least 143 of the men (records could not be found for ten of them), or three-quarters of the crew, had not been in the ship longer than a year. The officers fared no better: even leaving aside the three specialists embarked just for the cruise, the Captain, Executive Officer, TAS Officer, Ordnance Officer, and both sub-lieutenants had joined since mid-November 1948; only the Engineering Officer had been aboard for more than a year.

The continuing turnover points to the basic turmoil of postwar naval life. Several of *Crescent's* officers, appearing before the Mainguy Commission, complained of the poor attitude of postwar recruits to discipline, on the premise that these had spent the war years at home without the steadying hand of a father.⁴² One could just as easily surmise these same lads joining the Navy in search of that elusive stabilizing discipline, and not finding it, except as expressed in an apparent fetish for pre-war spit and polish.⁴³ When the Commissioners reported the breakdown of the Divisional System, they attributed it to the inexperience and lack of training of the officers. But that belies the fact that even the best trained and most experienced officers could not have made work a system of

⁴¹ *Crescent*, "Report of Proceedings [for August 1946]," 6 September 1946.

⁴² Audette Papers, vols 13-12 and 14-1, *passim*.

⁴³ Tyre interview, 9 October 1997.

personnel management that did not allow officers and men to serve together sufficiently long to become familiar enough with each other for juniors to bring forward personal problems and seniors to offer appropriate individual advice. In this, however, *Crescent* was no different from any other ship in the fleet (except the carrier, which had unique crew requirements).

Why then, if west coast destroyers did not figure prominently in the unrest of 1947, did the outbreaks of 1949 seem to be focussed in them? Presumably their conditions generally saw the same degree of improvement through 1948 as those of the east coast, and similarly were tempered by the same moderate instability of frequent draftings. A clue is offered

by reviewing the table showing the distribution of *Crescent's* complement by branch (see **Figure 22**) in conjunction with the distribution by rank (see

RANK	COMPLEMENT CMITTEE (1946)				MARCH 1949	
	War		Peace		(New Ratings)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
C1	6	2.47%	5	2.60%	7	3.74%
C2					13	6.95%
P1	41	16.87%	37	19.27%	25	13.37%
P2					17	9.09%
LS	37	15.23%	30	15.63%	22	11.76%
AB	159	65.43%	120	62.50%	75	40.11%
OS					28	14.97%
Total	243	100.00%	192	100.00%	187	100.00%

Figure 42: Rank Distribution of *Crescent* Ratings.

Figure 42).⁴⁴ This reveals

that, if there was a shortage of traditional Seamen, *Crescent* was overborne in Chiefs and Petty Officers: against authorized complements of 6 and 41 (war), and 5 and 37 (peacetime complement), there were 20 and 42 respectively borne in March 1949. This

⁴⁴ This table includes the division of each of the chief and the petty officer ranks into first and second class rates under the new structure implemented in early 1949 and which will be discussed below.

was a situation differing from the earlier excess of senior ratings, which had impacted the fleet in increased draftings and restricting the number of ships in commission. Instead, it reflected perhaps the single most contentious matter then affecting *Crescent's*, or for that matter any ship's complement in the RCN: the Navy-wide restructuring of substantive ratings which came into effect in February of that year.

This was, of course, one of the reforms identified by Houghton and then represented by Grant to Claxton as fundamental to redressing the inequities in the Naval pay scale. In the initial round of tri-service harmonization of conditions of service in 1946, the Army and the RCAF had brought their structures very closely in line, but the Navy had maintained a separate five tier lower deck rank structure (as opposed to the others' seven tier, which differed in having two levels of each of the sergeant or petty officer and of the warrant or chief petty officer ranks). The RCN also did not rigidly adhere to the others' trade group progression, continuing instead with variances in specialist technician pay, the most prominent being "charge" pay for Engine Room Artificers (ERAs) in recognition of their special responsibilities for running ships' propulsion machinery.⁴⁵ In the wake of the morale crisis of 1947, the Navy came to recognize that its half-hearted effort at integration had in fact left it with a far smaller

⁴⁵ The RCN also differed in having a separate rank progression for artificers, who advanced from fifth (5/c) to first class (1/c), corresponding to, but distinguishing them from, the ratings of the Seaman and Supply trades (1/c was equivalent to CPO). For ease of comprehension, this dissertation has tended to use the more familiar ranks as applying to all.

proportion of the pay budget than that enjoyed by either the Army or the Air Force.⁴⁶ At the same time, the growing crisis in Europe over the Berlin blockade focussed naval staff attention on mobilization plans. Expansion problems during the recent war were assessed as being in part the result of “[in]sufficient numbers of men in the upper branches to permit the efficient operation of the navy at the commencement of an emergency, with the inevitable influx of untrained personnel, until the length of time required to train additional senior ratings has elapsed.”⁴⁷ Only a year before the RCN had too many senior rates. Where that situation had been redressed through the fall of 1947 and early winter of 1948, circumstances had now conspired to create a shortage.

A special Committee on Advancement and Conditions of Service was struck to propose a solution. It very quickly discerned the fundamental problem with which it would grapple for the next several months:

... the fact that the Army and the Air Force consider that men improve in trade skill through time, whereas the Navy considers that both technical knowledge and Service experience are required for the effective performance of any job. Consequently, skill in trade qualifies a man for substantive [rank] advancement, thus interlocking substantive and trade pay in the Navy concept.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ NSS 1279-17. “Minutes of the Third Meeting...”, 24 February 1948; and “Interim Report [#1]”, 1 March 1948. It was determined that the average monthly pay by service, under the conditions then in force, was:

<u>Service</u>	<u>Pay of Rank</u>	<u>Trades Pay</u>	<u>Total</u>
Navy	\$76.60	\$ 8.53	\$87.13
Army	70.46	12.66	92.12
Air Force	78.77	18.94	97.72

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, MND to Governor General in Council, 28 June 1948.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, “Minutes of the Second Meeting...”, 20 February 1948.

The author of that statement, Commander Hennessy, might have added that a sub-text to their discussions was another fundamental difficulty: getting the other services (and the minister) to recognize that naval conditions of service were unique - living space in a ship governed crew size, and both were at a premium in comparison to an air base or even a field unit. A warship is barracks, recreation centre, workplace and battlefield all within the physical confines of the hull. Sailors have to combine several functions out of sheer efficiency, and without the redundancy the other forces enjoy.

In the end, the committee determined that strict adoption of the Army-Air Force rank and trade group system was the only workable compromise. They recommended that it be implemented across all

branches and in combination with an increase in the authorized percentage of substantive ratings, leading seaman and above, from the present 45.8% to

51.74% (see **Figure 43**).⁴⁹ The new

distribution was to be effected essentially by promoting all present Leading rates with more than three years seniority to the new rank of Petty Officer 2nd Class, present POs with less than three years seniority would become Petty Officers 1st Class, those with more than three years seniority would be promoted to Chief Petty Officer 2nd Class, and all present CPOs would become Chief Petty Officer 1st Class. The non-substantive

PRESENT		PROPOSED	
RATE	%	RATE	%
CPO	9.8	CPO-1	5.21
		CPO-2	7.94
PO	17.9	PO-1	13.39
		PO-2	12.4
Ldg Rate	18.1	Ldg Rate	12.8
TOTAL	45.8	TOTAL	51.74

Figure 43: Rating Restructuring (%)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, MND to Governor General in Council, 28 June 1948, Appendix A.

structure would be rationalized by a comprehensive re-designation of the various branch sub-divisions into specific "trades" and the creation of four "group" levels for each rank.⁵⁰

Oblivious to the full ramifications of their decision, NSHQ had set in motion a mechanism which would recreate the conditions underlying the unrest of 1947. Would advance notice, better pay and greater opportunity for early release be enough to stem any discontent this time? The new structure met the several objectives of simplification of the pay system, tri-service harmonization, more equitable division of pay amongst the services, and an increase in the number of senior rates being paid a higher wage. Finally, although the Complement Committee did not undertake a comprehensive revision of the whole of the RCN's structure as had been done in 1946 (and again in 1947 to account for the recruiting ceiling), there was the assurance that the bulk of the new senior rates would be employed in positions "commensurate with their rating and ability", such as training billets at reserve divisions and the fleet schools.

However, the circle had not been squared. Comment from the fleet was less than positive. Rear-Admiral Mainguy (FOAC), for example, recognized approvingly that replacement of specialist and branch pay with "the new pay and rate structure... gave similar pay grades to all branches and acknowledged the fact that each branch had an equivalent responsibility in the efficient functioning of the ship as a fighting unit".⁵¹

⁵⁰ For example, the advancement maze for the gunners (see **Figure 20**) was reduced to: anti-aircraft (AA), control (CR), gunnery instructor (GI), layer (LR), quarters (QR), radar control (RC), and regulating (RG) trades; each could have one to four levels at each substantive rank. Hence, Jim Tyre's rate as LSAA2 meant he was an anti-aircraft gunner, in the second trade group level for the rank of Leading Seaman.

⁵¹ NSS 1279-17, FOAC to Naval Secretary, 27 January 1949.

However, he had to report the concerns of many of his senior rates: Seamen transferred into the Electrician Branch when it was established in 1947 but still awaiting trade training were left behind in trade group pay; Stokers were concerned that they could not advance as high as ERAs; ERAs bemoaned the loss of charge pay, and the fact that non-technical trades now received the same rate of pay as themselves; Seamen regretted the fact that there were now more Chief ERAs (a move designed to provide the technical trade some residual advantage), but without those men possessing the requisite leadership responsibilities or capabilities.⁵² There was also great concern over the status of the one truly new rating, that of Petty Officer 2nd Class. The final reclassification rated it equivalent to the Army-RCAF Sergeant, but the Navy held it as more closely equivalent to the old Leading rate, and in fact had at first proposed a split between Leading rate 1st and 2nd Class, not Petty Officer.⁵³ Ominously, the so-called "backbone" of the fleet, the chiefs and petty officers, were the most vociferous complainants of the new system. The future chairman of the Mainguy Commission saw this development and predicted, first in November 1948 and again in mid-February 1949, that unless NSHQ addressed the concerns of the senior rates, there would be trouble in the fleet.⁵⁴

Implementation of the new structure began on 1st February, to be effective by the 15th; it appears that *Crescent* received her nominal roll with the revised rates in the mail at

⁵² *Ibid.*, and file *passim*.

⁵³ *Crowsnest*, *op. cit.*, and file 1279-17, extract of Naval Board Minute 246-1, 29 April 1948.

⁵⁴ NSS 1279-17, FOAC [Mainguy] to Naval Secretary, 1 November 1948 and 17 February 1949.

the end of the month, mixed in with all the other turmoil on arrival at Shanghai.⁵⁵ As most of the new senior rates were to be employed at shore establishments, it was never intended to have a major impact upon ships' complements, other than some minor adjustments to ensure all required branch and trade group positions were filled.⁵⁶ The temporary increase in the numbers of senior rates in ships would be balanced in short order by the pervasive drafting process. Such was the case with the ships of the east coast fleet which were, for the most part, alongside in Halifax, and whose experience is best summarized by the commanding officer of the frigate *Swansea*:

Changeover to the new rating structure... was accomplished with a minimum of difficulties and, by dint of much overtime work in the ship's office, it was possible to adjust arrears of pay in time for the February payment. The new structure had caused general satisfaction although it will no doubt be some time before all concerned are familiar with the new titles and, more particularly, their abbreviations, the responsibilities and priveleges [sic] which accompany them. Furthermore, it is thought that it will be a number of years before senior ratings of non-seaman branches will be competent of carrying out general duties compatible with the full meaning of their rate.⁵⁷

Ships without the luxury of time in port, however, were overwhelmed. HMCS *St Stephen*, the North Atlantic weather station frigate, reported that the great many changes

⁵⁵ Records ordering the transition could not be located in any of the headquarters files. It appears that the new establishments were not promulgated all at once, but in some sort of rotation. None of the rolls appears to have survived, although a reference to *Crescent's* as NSS 1279-17, dated 12 February 1949, was found on the personnel file of sailor #55 (in a follow-on letter advising a revision to his rate).

⁵⁶ NSS 1279-22, Complement Committee Minute 107-18, 6 May 1948. It does not appear that any of the complements were formally reconfigured as a result of the restructuring.

⁵⁷ DHH. 8000. *Swansea*, "Report of Proceedings [for February 1949]," 7 March 1949.

“suffered” by the ship’s company just before sailing on 7 February meant undertaking “the patrol known to be the most arduous of the year, with fewer experienced personnel on board..., [and] combined with sheer bad toss and weather, may account for the fact that the patrol might well be labelled... the ‘Breakdown Patrol’.”⁵⁸ The West Coast ships quite literally were all at sea for the process, having sailed on their various tasks at the beginning of the month. Their reports of proceedings, concentrating as such upon operational matters, do not mention the administrative burden created by the new structure. The cruiser *Ontario* and the frigate *Antigonish*, with their unique training complements, may not have noticed any undue effects. However, having to implement the changes away from home port and with the existing ships’ companies created a special problem for the two other Canadian ships at sea - the destroyers *Athabaskan* and *Crescent*.

The introduction of the new rank structure presented a confusing set of circumstances to the lower deck of the RCN. Although included as part of a general package of reform, and in conjunction with a significant pay increase (of over 20 per cent for junior rates; see **Figure 31**), it nonetheless challenged the established order of life at sea. It was demonstrated in a previous chapter that members of *Crescent*’s crew tended to be younger than normal, and that the general skill level possibly also was below standard. Now, the arbitrary implementation of the new plan temporarily put aside the

⁵⁸ DHH, 8000, *St Stephen*, “Report of Proceedings [for February 1949],” 9 March 1949. The similar reports for all other ships in commission at that time are held on the DHH 8000-series files, and were reviewed to confirm consistency with the views quoted in the text.

usual requirements for promotion: time in rank, merit, and eligibility by qualification (in the re-structuring, anyone not fully qualified was marked "NQ", to take courses at a later date). Key aspects of the fundamental structure of shipboard life were thrown into disarray. As one of the seamen in *Crescent* later observed, "Many of the new PO2s had not been the best of Leading hands, and now they were lording it over their former messmates."⁵⁹ The tension had become apparent on the voyage across the Pacific, as some of these rates began to anticipate their new station in life. The ship's unofficial newspaper printed one cutting ditty of "Leading Stoker [X] shaking the Stoker's Mess:"⁶⁰

Rise, the time is passing,
And you lie dreaming on;
The forenoon watch have donned their dungarees.
And to the Engine Room have gone.

A place on this ship awaits you.
Each one his job to do;
The Chief Stoker is waiting.
With his little job for you.

There's coffee on the hot-plate,
And bacon in the pan;
I have done as much for you,
As possibly I can.

From the Stokehold to the Gear Room,
Where Macdonald wastes his time;
To the Engine Room where Harry,
Makes one fresh ton in nine.

This simple little ditty,
He roars at us each day;

⁵⁹ Tyre interview, 9 October 1997.

⁶⁰ "The CRESCENT Globetrotter," Issue No. 8. 24 February 1949.

But show a little pity,
For he's only trying to become — A P.O.1st some day!

It would not have been the first time that persons were promoted beyond their level of competence, but the change in complement from the authorized 42 chiefs and petty officers to a new total of 62, with a commensurate drop in the number of junior ratings from the authorized 150 in the peacetime complement (196 war) to 125 effectively reduced the number of working deck hands in *Crescent* by at least 20 per cent. Quite literally, there were suddenly too many Chiefs and not enough Seamen to perform the myriad shipboard tasks (see **Figure 44**).

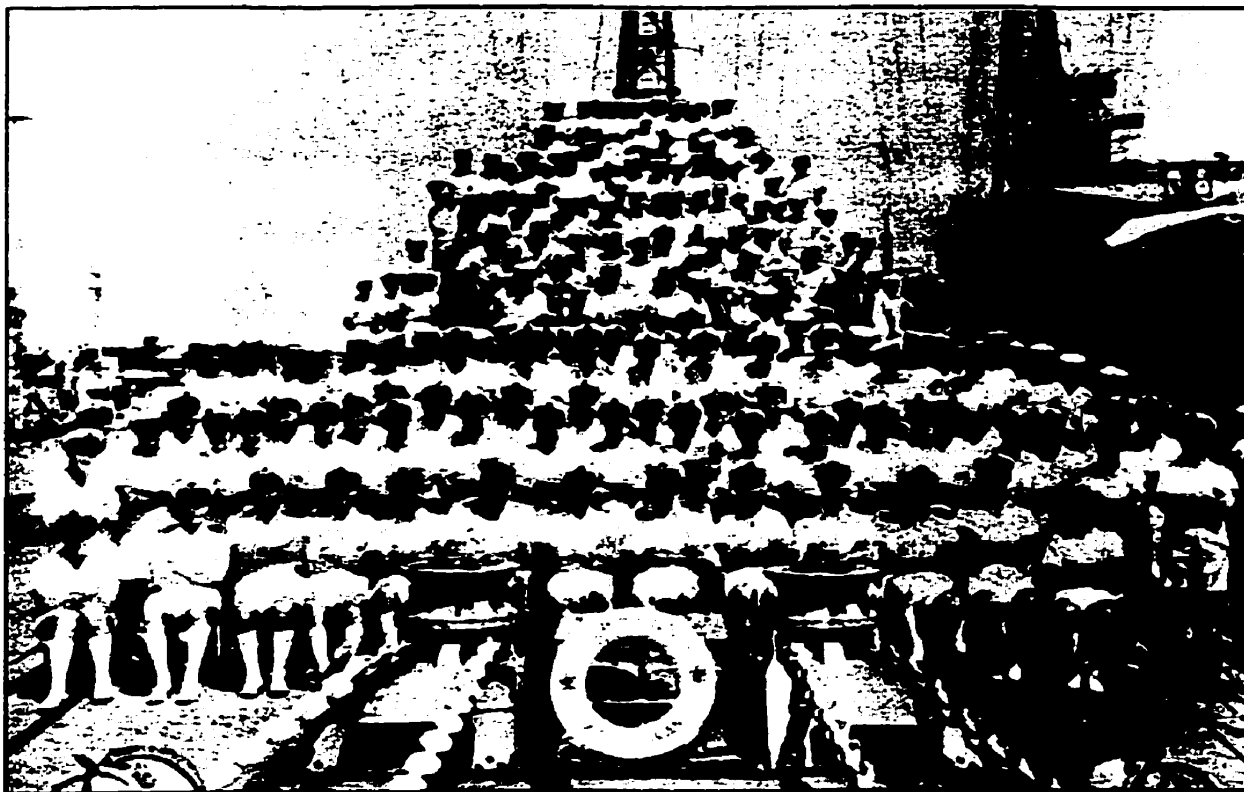


Figure 44: Ship's Company of HMCS *Athabaskan*, one month after the incident of 26 February 1949. This photograph reveals the normal complement of officers (12 in number) across the front row, but an over-representation of chiefs and petty officers (49) in the second and third row, against the remaining sailors (105) (CFPU, PMR 98-157).

And so it came to pass that on the evening of 14 March 1949, alongside that rain swept jetty in Nanking, China, the duty watch in HMCS *Crescent* found itself with too few hands to respond to a numbing sequence of misadventures: humping the beer for the British embassy on to the jetty and then back on board; replacing the gangplank when it washed away: standing sentry over the ship and the canteen ashore. The Able Seaman who would be the ringleader of the incident the next morning told the Mainguy Commission that, "we asked PO2 [X] to ask the coxswain if he would put us in two watches, as it was too much for the small watches we had," but the request was never actioned.⁶¹ After the fact, Sub-Lieutenant Birch-Jones, the officer-of-the-day, recorded his lasting impression of rounds that evening: "Later, as I went through the messdecks, the men were sitting on benches and talking in subdued tones. I remember thinking how unusually quiet the ship had become."⁶² The next morning, faced with the prospect of humping the beer back to the jetty, 83 men responded to the call "*Out pipes*" by locking themselves into their mess.

It is easy to envision a similar set of circumstances attending *Athabaskan's* fuelling in Manzanillo, with too few junior hands to accomplish that inherently labour-intensive undertaking in the humidity, heat and primitive surroundings of that port. On top of it all, the ship had not yet gone into Tropical Routine, and the morning's fuelling was to be followed by a full afternoon's work. Dick Berg, one of the Seamen who struggled with the lines and hoses that 26th of February, had been involved in the incident

⁶¹ "Testimony *Crescent*," p. 1786.

⁶² Birch-Jones, "The China expedition of 1949," p. 15.

on board *Ontario* in August 1947. He maintains the only connection between the two events was the sudden, overwhelming feeling of frustration at “what was viewed as an unreasonable work environment or treatment.”⁶³ An ill-conceived order from the Executive Officer, “to put [their] caps on straight” and off the backs of their heads, was sufficient contributing cause to set 90 men in *Athabaskan* to barricading themselves in their mess decks.⁶⁴

In each case, the sailors enjoyed immediate resolution of their demands. Although neither Executive Officer was sacked, the men did obtain the direct intervention of their captains to address their plight. The duty watches in *Crescent* were revised, and greater attention was paid to organizing recreational activities ashore. *Athabaskan* sailed from Manzanillo that afternoon, but thereafter assumed a Tropical Routine. Divisional officers and chiefs and petty officers in both ships adopted a more active interest in the welfare of their men. Just as importantly, no retribution followed. David Groos heard Requestmen, and the most discomfort anyone had was summoning enough courage to face the Captain. The Mainguy Report records that charges of slackness were laid against certain of those involved in *Athabaskan*, “Each case was heard and those who had no reasonable excuse were cautioned”, although, as the commissioners further observed, “Caution is not a punishment.”⁶⁵

⁶³ Interview. Berg, and correspondence.

⁶⁴ The Mainguy Report, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

The incident a few days later in *Magnificent* demands re-examination. Where the sailors in *Athabaskan* and *Crescent* had been unaware of their respective actions, those in the aircraft carrier were fully cognizant of the earlier incidents, and their apparent immediate success at no personal cost. On the morning of Sunday, 20 March 1949, the early call to “*Flying stations*” at 05:30 was postponed because of suddenly adverse weather conditions. The men were advised they would be piped again at 08:50, but in the meantime should follow their regular routine, which included breakfast and then falling in to clean ship at 07:45. The description in The Mainguy Report of what followed is most revealing:

At “out pipes” (0740), the chief petty officer in charge of the aircraft handlers noticed that the only handlers on the flight deck were leading hands. He sent a petty officer [2nd class] below to see what was wrong. The petty officer reported the men were not coming up.... The chief petty officer then went below and found the men sitting around their mess deck in silence. When he asked them if they were coming out he received no reply.... The state of affairs was reported to the Captain. He proceeded to the mess deck..... At the time of the Captain’s visit [at 0810], all ratings present in the mess were then employed in scrubbing out their mess deck. This work, which would have been part of the normal duty of most of the men after 0745, was well advanced. ...⁶⁶

This “incident” in *Magnificent* was nothing of the same scale or intent of those in *Crescent* or *Athabaskan*. It most likely would not have occurred but for the inspiration of the actions in the destroyers. In the tradition of mass protest in the RCN, it most certainly would not have received any attention outside the ship were it not for the interest already provoked by the others.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

How much outside concern even those other incidents would have raised - given the unhappy past prevalence of similar actions in the RCN - is unknown, but for the fact that word of the naval unrest reached the press just as agitation by the Canadian Seamen's Union (CSU) was beginning anew. On 5 April, the Minister of Labour rose in the House of Commons to report, "About ten days ago, the Canadian Seamen's Union adopted a new procedure... of refusing to sign new sailing articles."⁶⁷ When Brooke Claxton, in his capacity as Acting Under-Secretary of State, reported to Cabinet that the CSU agitation had taken the form of sit-down strikes and had spread to Canadian merchant ships abroad, the loyalty of the Royal Canadian Navy became a concern.⁶⁸ The St Laurent government had just weathered an attack by the Conservative Opposition over the issue of communist infiltration of the government bureaucracy.⁶⁹ With a general election planned for June, the possibility of subversion of the Naval Service had to be dealt with expeditiously. A Commission of Inquiry was struck, and Rear-Admiral Mainguy, Louis Audette, and Leonard Brockington set to work.

* * *

The Mainguy Commission was able to establish very early that the loyalty of the RCN was not in doubt. The men, especially those from the west coast destroyers, were in fact surprised that the question was even raised: "Communists? Us guys from Alberta

⁶⁷ House of Commons Debates, 5 April 1949, col. 2335.

⁶⁸ NAC. RG 2. vol 125, file D-16-3-S, memo to A/SSEA, 20 April 1949.

⁶⁹ Pickersgill. My Years with Louis St Laurent, pp. 75-76.

were all red-necks!”⁷⁰ With that out of the way, the commissioners could turn to “other matters concerning the Royal Canadian Navy” (their instructions as given in the long title of the report). How did they fare?

Returning to the litany of “General Causes Contributing to [the] Breakdown of Discipline” described at the outset of this chapter, and taking into consideration the context and analysis provided thereafter, it is evident that not all of the findings and conclusions of the Mainguy Commission were valid. The report attributed the breakdown of the Divisional System to the lack of training and experience of junior officers. The evidence from *Crescent’s* Wardroom, however, is that all officers serving in Canadian warships had at a minimum taken the month-long Divisional Officers Course, with those who had trained with the Royal Navy having been immersed in the Divisional System for the better part of two years. Where the system broke down was in the too-frequent rotation of the members of ship’s companies at all rank levels, and on this count the Commission was absolutely correct. As for changes in routine, Lieutenant Wood was able to establish that, although he had modified *Crescent’s* routine to conform to the British flagship in Shanghai, the routine in the Canadian ship was still less arduous, especially as he allowed the men to sleep an hour longer than the British sailors.⁷¹ Otherwise, most differences were occasioned by the Captain’s hectic diplomatic and social schedule. Even though pressed for time, *Crescent’s* officers would have been better served by offering their senior ratings some sort of explanation. In this regard, the

⁷⁰ Interview. Berg.

⁷¹ “Testimony *Crescent*,” p. 1454.

commissioners were correct to point to the breakdown in confidence (and hence communication) between officers and petty officers, but they failed to adequately address the reason why this had happened. Frequent draftings made it difficult to establish comfortable working relationships, but the problem lay in the fact that the great bulk of junior officers and petty officers, having joined as Volunteer Reservists, had never been able to better their hasty wartime training, and hence neither had any great confidence in the professional abilities of the other. Underscoring this point is the fact that, even while the sailors did not care for the mid-Atlantic affectations of the RN-trained officers, they tended to trust in their professional knowledge more than that of the recent arrivals to the permanent force.⁷² This applied equally to the lower deck. A recollection prepared for a reunion of *Crescent's* ship's company some 40 years after the China deployment styled the Coxswain (a wartime transfer from the RCNVR) as "A cheerful man, he was liked by all". but also allowed that he was "a dark and swarthy man [who] wore a CPO's cap at a rakish angle more reminiscent of a corvette wartime CPO's cap. It was always old and battered. Depending upon the time of day, he exuded varying odours of rum." That stands in contrast to the description of the Chief ERA (a pre-war RCN) as "A large, quiet and dignified man [who] commanded considerable respect including that of the Engineer Officer."⁷³

The commission's handling of the issues upon which they seemed to lay special interest - what they styled as an absence of a distinguishing Canadian identity in the

⁷² Interviews, Tyre and Berg, as well as with Jack Harper, Ottawa, 20 May 1998..

⁷³ Birch-Jones, "HMCS CRESCENT - The China Deployment," p. 5.

Navy, and an artificial distance between officers and men - were discussed and proven misplaced in a previous chapter. On the remaining subject of Welfare Committees, they were quite right in pointing to the likelihood that had these been functioning in any of *Athabaskan*, *Crescent* or *Magnificent*, none of those incidents would have transpired. But that raises the unanswered question: were there Welfare Committees in place and functioning in the other ships of the fleet? And from that: why did these three ships experience trouble, and the rest of the fleet did not?

This chapter has offered a response to this latter question. It remains a mystery as to why The Mainguy Report recognized neither the extent of unrest in the summer of 1947 nor the progress which NSHQ had managed in the year after preparation of the Morale Study. In particular, it failed to address the implications of the critical timing of the Rank and Trade Group Re-Structuring in February 1949. Staff officers were consistent in providing testimony not just of problems, but of their efforts to overcome them.⁷⁴ One of *Crescent's* senior Seamen was still sufficiently incensed in June 1949 over the new rating structure that he harangued the Mainguy Commission at length over it. Even though Audette would describe him as one of the few "Articulate - sensible" witnesses, none of it seemed to register.⁷⁵

Possible explanations for the omissions abound, at least with respect to the restructuring. Perhaps it was because it only immediately and personally affected senior

⁷⁴ The testimony of Admiral Grant, usually painted as the scapegoat, is particularly interesting in this regard. See Audette Papers, vol 14-3, "Testimony, Admiral Grant," pp. 3462- 3511.

⁷⁵ "Testimony *Crescent*," 8 June 1949, pp. 1883ff.

chief petty officers in a negative fashion; in fact a clear majority of the lower deck of the RCN had their rates increased, and hence benefited materially from the adjustments in back-pay to July 1948, not to mention the pay raise effective October 1948. The majority of witnesses and the Commissioners themselves would have seen the new structure as being in the long term interests of the Navy.⁷⁶ And then there is the fact that the implied mandate of the Commission was to find problems in the relationship between officers and the men. This was clearly an issue restricted to the lower deck. Interestingly, recent interviews with former officers provoke either no memory of the restructuring or a reaction dismissive of it as a source of discontent. Former ratings, however, virtually without exception still remember it with the utmost bitterness. It is the personal experience of this author that, in ships in which chiefs and petty officers are openly grumbling, the junior ratings soon feel emboldened to vent their grievances. In circumstances such as these, the degree of effectiveness of Ships' Welfare Committees could only have been a contributing, not a causal, factor of mutiny.

Finally, it was ministerial policy to develop tri-service conditions of service, and there could be little advantage in tilting at this particular windmill. This raises the issue of political interest in the Navy, and it is on this level that further explanations for the

⁷⁶ There is some question as to whether the Commissioners other than Mainguy truly comprehended the enormity of the new structure: the list of witnesses appearing before the Commission categorizes Chief Petty Officers and Petty Officers without distinguishing between them as to 1st or 2nd Class, despite the new rates already having been in effect for some months. See Audette Papers, vol 13-5, "List of Witnesses." Refer also to the quoted passage above describing the incident in *Magnificent*: note the failure to distinguish the PO as "2nd Class", even though this was a critical factor in the unfolding of events.

failure of the Commission to credit previous initiatives are more troubling. Louis Audette and Harold Grant made no secret of their personal dislike for each other. Both maintained proper relations on the professional level, and one trusts that it was Audette's dissociation from the Navy after retirement from the Reserves in October 1947 that had blinded him to the immense improvements in the naval service that began almost immediately after that date. Rollo Mainguy, however, was not only aware of the improvements, he had predicted the probability of trouble in the fleet over mishandling of the re-structuring issue. The final report, written by the two "civilian" commissioners, presented an essentially Liberal view of a Naval Service which was not sufficiently "Canadian". Did Mainguy recognize what he was up against, and therefore deferred to the submission of a politically acceptable report? Or was he happy to wait in the wings, as had George Jones when Percy Nelles was toppled in 1943?⁷⁷ Whichever of those questions pertain, it would seem the only reason Harold Grant survived the publication of The Mainguy Report is that Brooke Claxton had far less interest in the Royal Canadian Navy than had Angus L. Macdonald. The commissioners had given him what he needed: there were no communists in the Canadian Navy. With no desire to provoke controversy of a different sort, there were no calls for the resignation of Admiral Grant.

⁷⁷ As this dissertation was being completed, an excellent analysis of that earlier episode had just been completed: Richard Oliver Mayne, "Behind the Scenes at Naval Service Headquarters: Bureaucratic Politics and the Dismissal of Vice-Admiral Percy W. Nelles" (Wilfrid Laurier University, unpublished MA thesis, 1998). Mayne's work points to the influence upon the Naval Minister's personal secretary (J.J. Connolly) of a group of lawyers serving in the RCNVR. Audette was one of those officers. Did the Mainguy commission present an opportunity to repeat that earlier success, while settling some other unfinished business? This author came to know and respect Louis in his later years, and sincerely regrets his passing, not least for the chance to address this issue.

In the fine Canadian (and British) naval tradition of mutiny, the men also got what they had wanted - the immediate attention of their direct superiors to their local issues. Indeed, the holding of a formal commission of inquiry was almost too much, and many of the ratings were plainly uncomfortable with the process. Certainly, it allowed for an airing of grievances, but these inevitably came out as petty in such a setting. Ultimately, it appears that in *Crescent's* case the best tonic was the five-month cruise without the interruptions of home port draftings and family distractions, strengthened by the bonding experience of danger on the Yangtze - and, yes, of mutiny. In the remaining months of that cruise, *Crescent's* ship's company melded to such a degree that 40 years after, they assembled for a series of reunions, a rarity in the Canadian Navy for a particular crew.

As for the Navy as a whole, in June 1949, even as the Mainguy Commission was taking its testimony, there were incidents in the frigates *Swansea* in Halifax, and *Rockcliffe* in Esquimalt. In a complete break with previous practice, the ringleaders were identified, summarily tried, and sent to cells. Word of the events still was not widely advertised,⁷⁸ but officers of the Royal Canadian Navy were finally in a position to feel confident that, in general, the concerns of their men were being addressed in such a way that these mutineers could be treated for what they were - not a safety valve, but a threat to established order.

⁷⁸ These are known only from an oblique reference in "Testimony, Admiral Grant," p. 3510; and NAC, RG 24, vol 11.407, FSA 8800-381/60, vol I, "HMCS *Swansea* Report of Proceedings [for June 1949]," 8 July 1949, notes "a most serious breach of discipline occurred on board in which eight seamen were involved." Interview, Berg, revealed the incident in *Rockcliffe*, although he could not recall any details.

Conclusion

As The Mainguy Report was being delivered into the hands of the Minister of National Defence at the end of November 1949, HMCS *Crescent* was being “prepared for going into reserve and the sad job of de-storing and stripping the ship was carried out”¹

(see **Figure 45**). A low-key ceremony on 1 December marked the official occasion of her paying-off, and the bulk of her ship’s company immediately transferred to HMCS *Sioux*. That

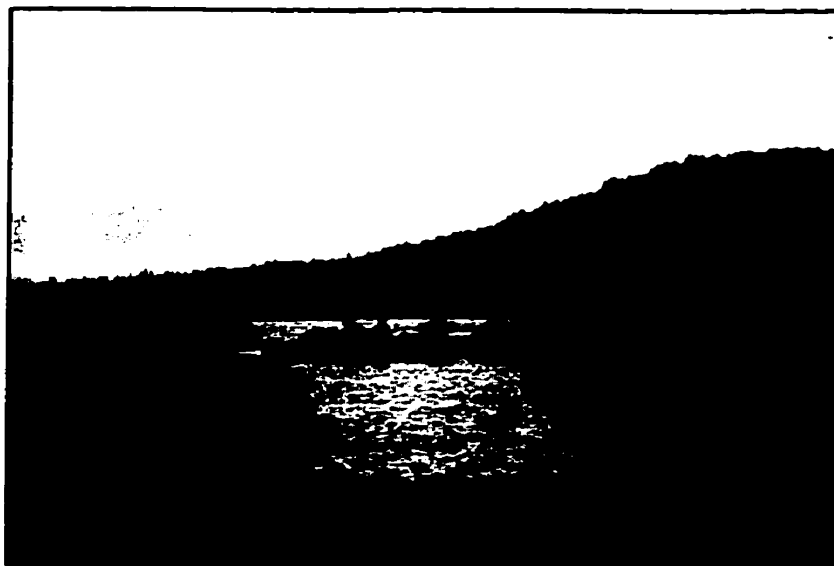


Figure 45: *Crescent* entering Esquimalt harbour, flying her paying-off pennant, 15 November 1949 (CFPU, OC-184-7).

destroyer, a near-sister to *Crescent*, had been in

reserve since the end of the war, and was being brought back into commission, refitted to new standards of habitability in messing and bunking. When *Sioux* joined HMC Ships *Cayuga* and *Athabaskan* to sail from Esquimalt on 5 July 1950, in response to the outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula, many of *Crescent*’s crew found themselves returning to the Far East barely a year after their China cruise.

¹ *Crescent*, “Report of Proceedings [for November 1949],” 1 December 1949.

The “Golden Decade” of the RCN generally is accepted as that ushered in with the commissioning of the destroyer-escort *St Laurent* in 1955 and ending with the unification of the Canadian Forces. It is remembered as having been precipitated by a combination of the revitalizing effects of The Mainguy Report and of the Korean War. This assessment, however, must be qualified by the experience of *Crescent* and her crew, which indicates that the Canadian fleet was well on the road to recovery before either of those milestones came to pass.

This dissertation has studied the cruise of HMCS *Crescent* to China in the first half of 1949 as a case study in the challenges faced by a country trying to make its mark internationally when its foreign policy and military establishments are still both in the early stages of development. The work began by acknowledging and linking Canada’s experience of gunboat diplomacy and mutiny. One of the most salient results of bringing together the archives of the Navy and the Department of External Affairs was to discover the extent to which officials in both institutions were concerned about national identity. The origin of *Crescent*’s China mission was the search by the foreign policy establishment for an increased Canadian presence on the world stage as a means of asserting national identity. When brooding about why, when on the world stage, large numbers of Canadian crews had mutinied, the Mainguy Commission concluded that the Navy did not yet sufficiently have a national identity, particularly in its failure more fully to reflect Canadian society. The Commission, which strongly reflected the views of the government elite, not surprisingly asserted that the Navy’s ills could all be cured by a stronger national identity. Yet the archives reveal a quite different set of issues. The

Navy, still suffering grievously in early 1949 from the effects of upheaval and retrenchment following the Second World War, was in no way prepared for the challenge of the China mission. Senior naval officers knew it, even as they struggled to correct problems of which they were fully aware, but in many instances lacked the resources to address. In this light the Mainguy Commission's recommendations were an ideological gloss.

In his memoirs, Claxton expressed satisfaction with The Mainguy Report, claiming "The whole tone strengthened my hand regarding modernization of the treatment of personnel and the further Canadianization of the Navy."² Grant, however, had identified many of the problems plaguing the Naval Service and recommended solutions to the Minister in October 1947. Although the Minister was not forthcoming with the funds required to build the desperately needed married quarters and to refit emergency-built warships to more modern habitability standards, the Chief of the Naval Service was nonetheless able to move ahead on other fronts, including a fundamental re-organization of the lower deck rank and trade group structure. Following the rash of desertions and lock-ins of 1947, there were no incidents in the RCN through 1948. The withering wastage rate was brought under control, and more ships were gradually brought back into commission. About the same time the Mainguy Commission presented its report, the RCN was within reach of its goal of a 10,000-man force (see Appendix 2). Given the progress advanced in so many areas in spite of continued government parsimony, it is possible to conclude that The Mainguy Report did not strengthen, but

² Claxton, "Autobiography," as quoted in Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol III, p. 127.

rather forced Claxton's hand to follow through on the remaining money matters it also identified. Naval appropriations were increased in the 1950 budget, but even in the face of mutiny the government did not fully grasp the point that more national identity was not a solution in itself. The requisite financial and moral support finally would be ensured for an unrelated reason: the unavoidable pressure of the deepening Cold War for greatly increased defence spending.

The chequered experience of *Crescent's* cruise did not deter the foreign policy establishment from calling upon the RCN in the summer of 1950 to provide Canada's initial contribution to the forces of the United Nations gathering to oppose the Communist invasion of South Korea. The official history of Canadian naval operations in Korean waters provides no background to the decision, other than "The reason that the Government had chosen the Royal Canadian Navy... was simply that, of the three armed services, only the RCN was in a position to provide an active service force for immediate use."³ Subsequent researchers have not enjoyed success in finding any elaborating evidence, but the most recent analysis proposes that it was a "corridor deal" between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Chief of the Naval Staff.⁴ Pearson's belief in the prestige potential of Canadian warships remained unshaken, and Grant's

³ Thor Thorgrimsson and E.C. Russell, Canadian Naval Operations in Korean Waters, 1950-1955 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1965), p. 3.

⁴ Telephone interview by author with Peter Haydon, 7 April 1999. Haydon is the author of "Canada's Naval Commitment to the Korean War: Prudent Employment or Opportunism?", *op. cit.*

assessment of the operational readiness of his fleet was far more confident than it had been eighteen months earlier.

For all the unpleasantness culminating in the incident in *Crescent* on 15 March 1949, the five-month China cruise produced one immediately recognizable benefit. For the first time in the immediate postwar period, an RCN warship had been able to operate for a prolonged period without any changes in her ship's company. Despite the mutiny - or perhaps because of it - the officers, the chiefs and petty officers, and the junior hands got the chance to know one another better. Perhaps just as importantly they all had an uninterrupted opportunity to practice their profession. With only a few exceptions, all members of the ship's company appearing before the Commission reported a marked improvement in relations aboard the ship during the remaining three months of the cruise.⁵ Much the same beneficial results would come from the total of 21 long deployments of destroyers to Korean waters in 1950-1955, which broadened and deepened the cohesion and professionalism that had begun to emerge in the China mission.⁶

⁵ Audette Papers, vols 13-12 and 14-1, "Testimony CRESCENT", *passim*.

⁶ Thorgrimsson and Russell, Appendix 1, provides details on the Korean deployments. Note that they were undertaken by eight ships, in rotation. An alternative perspective is provided by Edward C. Meyers, Thunder in the Morning Calm: The Royal Canadian Navy in Korea, 1950-1955 (St Catharines, Ont: Vanwell, 1991), which describes a Navy going through a series of trials more similar to those of 1947, and that make the grievances of 1949 pale in comparison. The wonder is that, but for the experience of 1949 and the greater familiarity which was able to develop between officers and ratings, would that Navy have mutinied?

Throughout the duration of the Korean War, the Canadian military would devote greater attention to the build-up of NATO in Europe. Grant nonetheless had good institutional reasons to see the Navy engaged in the Far East, and it appears that the Pacific Squadron began preparations for a Korean deployment even before cabinet made its decision.⁷ That the RCN was the only one of the three services “in a position to provide an active service force” is a telling statement in its own right. For all the pain of the previous five years, the service had weathered the forecasted training period. Here was an opportunity to prove to the country the capability of its Navy, and to brighten the grim picture painted by the recently published Mainguy Report. The employment of Canadian destroyers in Korean waters in a variety of surface warfare roles also would serve to prove the rationale for a balanced fleet, and counter the voices already calling for the RCN to specialize in anti-submarine warfare.

The RCN was able to maintain a balanced structure until a defence review in the mid-1960s resulted in the re-organization of Canada’s defence forces, and crippling budget cuts thereafter rendered a large fleet no longer tenable. It remains to future historians to assess the truth behind the Golden Age of the RCN, but *Crescent* remained a part of the story. After being brought back into commission late in 1951 as a training destroyer to support the Cold War build-up of the Navy, *Crescent* again was taken out of service in 1953, to undergo conversion to destroyer-escort standard. When she rejoined the fleet on 31 October 1955, two days after the commissioning of *St Laurent*, she effectively had been rebuilt, the stain of mutiny quite literally cut away (see **Figure 46**).

⁷ Thorgrimsson and Russell, Canadian Naval Operations in Korean Waters, p. 2.

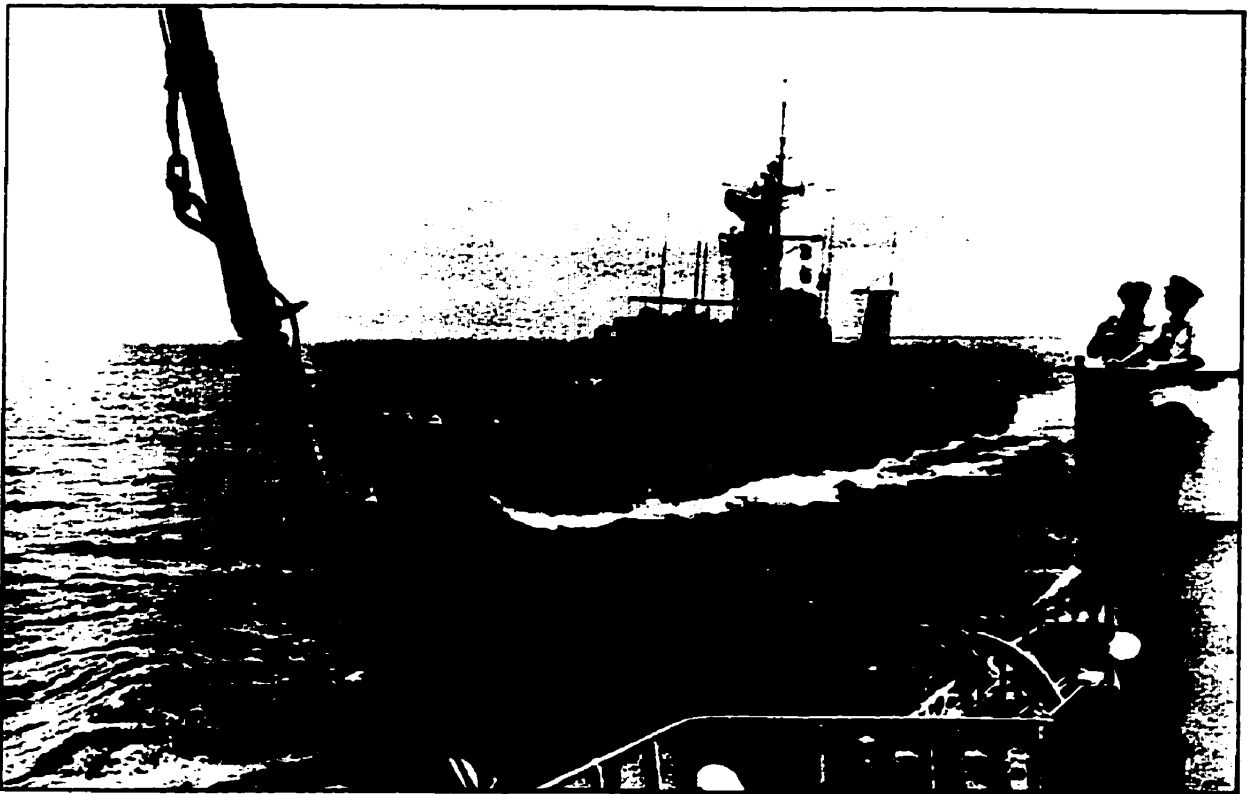


Figure 46: The rebuilt *Crescent* coming alongside the cruiser *Quebec* (ex-*Uganda*) for refuelling trials, March 1956 (CFPU, PMR 98-143).

* * *

A review of the circumstances under which the crew of HMCS *Crescent* eventually left the Navy provides a final round of insights into the postwar service. Two distinct phases - respectively, in the near-term and then over an extended period - are apparent. The first began almost immediately upon their return. Several witness from *Crescent* echoed the sentiments expressed by one rating in the following exchange with the Commissioners:

Q - Anything else?

- A - There's a lot of men that don't seem happy in the service. More in the junior ratings, stokers and seamen, and they are going around moaning all the time, they want to get out.
- Q - You suggest kicking them out?
- A - If they are going around not doing their job let them out. We feel we would be better off without them.⁸

Statements such as this led to yet another re-assessment of the safety valve policy of discharge By Purchase. Admiral Mainguy himself, having resumed his duties as Flag Officer Atlantic Coast, in November 1949 "submitted for the consideration of the Department:"

... that it has become apparent there are a few malcontents in the Navy who are unable to obtain their discharges under any of the categories outlined in KRCN Article 7.80.... [I]t is suggested that an additional clause be inserted in the column opposite "By Purchase" whereby a man who is completely dissatisfied with his Naval lot, can apply for discharge....

The retention of a thoroughly dissatisfied man in a Service, which is slowly but surely bettering itself, is most uneconomical and unwise, and it is felt that a channel should be provided whereby they can be discharged.⁹

The Navy appears to have taken the message to heart. Within a year of their return from China, twenty of *Crescent's* crew had been discharged from the service, only one of these under the unblemished item, "Engagement Expired". All the remainder still were honourable releases, but they are illustrative of the descending scale of official approval: two died, one in an off-duty accident, the other of natural causes; another two were granted a "Free Discharge", having sufficiently compassionate reasons of a financial nature as to make a buy-out inappropriate; ten obtained their release "By Purchase";

⁸ Audette Papers, vol 13-12, "Testimony CRESCENT", p. 1898.

⁹ NSS 4240-1, FOAC to Naval Secretary, "Discharge of Naval Personnel," 18 November 1949.

another was let go "Services Complete"; two were discharged "Services No Longer Required" ("SNLR"); and a final two were deemed "Unsuitable".¹⁰ After four years of unwillingness to grant discharges other than under clearly compassionate or strictly legal end-of-contract circumstances, even at the price of retaining the most unsavoury of characters, NSHQ obviously realized that it was time to do some housecleaning. Certainly, as had been promised both at the time of the incidents and again when appearing before the Mainguy Commission, no disciplinary action was taken against anyone involved. Of the twenty cases outlined above, only the latter five releases were instigated by the Navy. That did not mean that discharges were readily available. Rather, if one had a long Conduct Sheet (list of service offences) or previously had been labelled a "troublemaker", then an application was now more likely to receive favourable consideration. Indeed, later in 1949, at least two other members of *Crescent's* ship's company submitted requests for release which were refused (both of them later re-engaged and eventually retired in the mid-1960s). Nonetheless, the sudden spate of discharges other than at the end of engagement marks a distinct change in thinking on the part of the naval establishment.

The initial bloodletting completed, the range of discharge items narrowed considerably. After mid-1950, NSHQ allowed only one more discharge "By Purchase" during a first engagement (in 1952), although two men later sought (and were granted) these in the course of their second five-year engagements. Rather, the second phase constituted a steady stream of some 60 "Engagement Expired" releases through the early

¹⁰ See KRCN art. 7.80 (Table) for description of discharge items.

1950s, mostly as the postwar entries completed their five-year term. Of these, three returned within a year or two to the Navy, and the Army attracted another three, while a surprising number (11) subsequently joined the Air Force. Most of the crew, however, spent the next two decades providing valuable service to the Navy. Many ended their careers as Chief Petty Officers, and several accepted commissions. The last retired in 1979.

For *Crescent*, the incident of 15 March 1949 proved cathartic. It seems that the gravity of what had transpired worked in combination with the continuing absence from home port to finally bring the crew together, not unlike squabbling children being locked in a room and not allowed to come out until it is settled. Familiarity bred not contempt, but mutual confidence. The Mainguy Commission heard a litany of complaints and observed some very evident faults on both sides of the officer-rating divide. For all that, it was easy to overlook the simple truth that these men had all joined the Navy of their own free will. Maybe they did not fully understand the conditions of service put before them at the recruiting centre, but all that the men locked in *Crescent's* forward mess deck really wanted was fair treatment in a decent working environment. Somehow, out of the chain of events alongside that rain swept jetty in Nanking, they achieved that. They found themselves. Nor was this a short-lived affair. Something about the experience marked these men in such a positive fashion that in the past decade large numbers of them have met twice for reunions.

* * *

One question remains: why has *Crescent's* fateful cruise been virtually ignored by historians? Despite the obvious parallels, the Canadian experience evoked neither the drama of the *Amethyst* incident, nor the pathos of the *Sand Pebbles*, both well-known within naval circles. When mentioned at all, it is inevitably in the context of the mutinies. The cruise has never been examined from the perspective of its intended foreign policy mission, especially not as an example of gunboat diplomacy, and never as a point of departure into the more general state of the Canadian Navy.

The cruise of the *Crescent* is a classic case of repressed memory. The answer to its being ignored lies, in part, in that it was down-played by both the naval and foreign policy establishments at the time, more because it has been lost in the headiness of the subsequent build-up and golden years of each of those services. In the broad scheme of events, the presence of a single vessel had little influence on what proved to be an unsalvageable situation. But neither does her less-than-successful foray rest comfortably with the accepted histories of either the naval or the foreign services.

The limited extent and variety of primary and secondary Canadian sources raises important questions about institutional and individual memory. Why did DEA maintain more detailed files of the voyage than NSHQ? The officers of the naval staff objected to the despatch of an ill-prepared ship on a dubious solo mission halfway around the world. Once the destroyer was seconded, literally, to DEA, did they sub-consciously embark on their own rebellion against a government which was not concerned about the deterioration of their service? Against this, there is the fact that the crew of *Crescent* which embarked for the China cruise continues to hold regular reunions, a rarity for

peacetime units. which tend instead to encourage the gathering of anyone who ever served in them. What was there about the experience of this crew on this voyage that they saw as unique and worth remembering when everyone else wished to forget?

The wish to forget is underscored by the circumstances under which this dissertation was conceived in the winter and spring of 1983. This author was then a junior Bridge Watchkeeping Officer in HMCS *Gatineau*, one of the ships of the Second Canadian Destroyer Squadron which sailed to the Far East that spring. Although that cruise mirrored *Crescent*'s by almost 36 years to the day, it was billed as "the first ever visit of Canadian warships to the Chinese mainland" (that is, aside from Hong Kong). The fallacy of such a statement was quickly exposed by a junior officer for whom the training session on the Mainguy Commission was still relatively fresh in mind. Given, however, that Shanghai was added as a destination to the 1983 cruise at the behest of the Department of External Affairs so as to better relations with the People's Republic of China, the circumstances of the 1949 cruise were such that no official wished them to be resurrected. The "first ever" reference, if changed at all, was qualified simply, "to Red China".¹¹

The only recorded analysis of *Crescent*'s performance in China is that of the Royal Navy commander of the 8th Destroyer Flotilla to which the destroyer was attached.¹² In Canada, it was left to one of the Mainguy Commissioners to pose perhaps

¹¹ LCdr K.V. Watson, SLt M.D. Ferland and Lt(N) A.G. Stenson, "Far Horizons" 14 March -24 June 1983 (CANCOMDESRON 2 Commemorative Volume, 1983).

¹² Captain(D) 8th Destroyer Flotilla, 10 May 1949, *op. cit.*

the only post-deployment questions: "Do you think it would have been a good thing if a bunch of communists had come out and had a crack at you? What do you think the attitude of the ship's company would have been supposing somebody opened fire on the ship?" That these were asked only in context of the disciplinary trouble on board is disconcerting, as was the simple reply: "Well I think they would have wanted to get back at them."¹³

The obvious rejoinder - could they have? - is moot. This dissertation has demonstrated the low level of readiness of the postwar RCN. But, then, is there any evidence that *Amethyst* was better prepared? It is just as mischievous to ask, would the Canadian government's handling of the ensuing crisis have fared any better than Britain's? Evidently, no one in either Ottawa department appears to have thought through the full range of possibilities inherent in operating a warship on the Yangtze River. But then, neither did the British, longer practitioners of the art of gunboat diplomacy: otherwise, the *Amethyst* incident would not have transpired.

Ultimately, the only fair question is, what was it hoped to achieve by *Crescent's* deployment? The despatch of a warship to revolutionary China in 1949 was perhaps the first planned flirtation with gunboat diplomacy by a Canadian government. That it was

¹³ Audette Papers, Vol. 13-12, "Testimony CRESCENT", p. 1472. *Crescent's* voyage did excite memories of a previous adventure: see *Crowsnest*, Vol. 1, No. 8 (June 1949), pp. 4-5, 30, "The Salvador Affair." This article was penned under the pseudonym "Deadlight", later determined to be the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral Frank Houghton, who had served in HMCS *Skeena* when that ship intervened at British request in the El Salvador civil war in 1932. The article was intended as the first in a series of "Footnotes to History" showing "the type of unexpected adventure that has happened... to those of us who follow the sea." No further numbers in the series ever appeared, making it a footnote to history in its own right.

among the first foreign policy ventures initiated by the new administration of Prime Minister Louis St Laurent and Secretary of State Lester Pearson, intent as they were to make a departure from the isolationist preferences of Mackenzie King, is significant.

In his definitive study of gunboat diplomacy, James Cable describes four levels or classifications, arranged roughly in descending order of violence: definitive, purposeful, catalytic, and expressive.¹⁴ A chronological appendix of instances of gunboat diplomacy between 1919 and 1991 classifies the despatch of American and British warships to Shanghai in 1949 as “purposeful,”¹⁵ but does not include Canada or Australia (or, for that matter, France) in the list of nations operating in Chinese waters at that time. In the Canadian case, that is perhaps just as well. For where Cable defines “purposeful” as “limited naval force... employed... in order to change the policy or character of a foreign government or of some organised group...,”¹⁶ it clearly was the intent of the British and American governments to look to the safety of their nationals through the threat of application of force against the Chinese, whether Nationalist or Communist. Just as clearly, this was not the intent of the Canadian government, who in the end were quite satisfied to let the Royal Navy handle any fighting. Rather, the Canadian intentions, revolving as they did around notions of national prestige, more closely fit the definition of “expressive” gunboat diplomacy, in which warships are “employed to emphasise

¹⁴ Cable, Gunboat Diplomacy, Chapter 2, *passim*. Summary definitions are given in Chapter 2, footnote 55, of this dissertation.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.33.

attitudes, to lend verisimilitude to otherwise unconvincing statements, or to provide an outlet for emotion.”¹⁷

If not exactly meeting the precise requirements of the functional principle, the despatch of *Crescent* was entirely consistent with its spirit. The situation in China did not present a unique opportunity for Canadian representation, but the protection of Canadian nationals by Canada’s own armed forces carried its own logic. Pearson and St Laurent, however, do not appear to have appreciated the actual state of the RCN. For their own reasons. Claxton and Admiral Grant chose not to enlighten them. But neither did they explain, if they understood it themselves, the complexities of gunboat diplomacy. The experience of the RCN, such as it was and despite its small size, consisted of what today is called blue water operations. It did not include forcing a river passage.

If Pearson and St Laurent did not fully appreciate the limitations of Canadian naval force, they certainly were alive to its prestige potential. Purposeful gunboat diplomacy - the description usually applied to evacuation operations - is predicated upon the threatened use of force to impress foreigners not to act in a hostile manner. But who did the Canadian government wish to impress? Certainly not the Chinese. Rather, it seems that the objects of attention were Canada’s own allies, the United States and Great Britain. The delicate negotiations on the formation of NATO, the desire to establish a true Commonwealth of nations out of the crumbling British Empire, and the overriding principle of middle power functionalism all were factors in the *Crescent* decision - a perfect example of expressive gunboat diplomacy. The safety of Canadians in China was

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

in no way furthered by the presence of HMCS *Crescent*, but with her presence, at least initially, came the prestige accorded a country which could carry its own weight in world affairs, a buttress to its faltering allies. Results, however, are not always those intended. As a model for the diplomatic use of naval force by a middle power, the experience of *Crescent* in China stands as an unfortunate precedent.

The meaning of *Crescent's* experience as a display of national identity is no less inconvenient. The irony is that these great Liberals, in seeing the need to break with the isolationism of Mackenzie King, would invoke a method of representation abroad more akin to that associated with the Conservative Nationalism of Sir Robert Borden, that is, in providing military forces so as to ensure a seat on allied councils. The further irony is that, as the vessel to implement such a policy, they turned to the Royal Canadian Navy - the same fleet about which the Minister of National Defence would receive a report stating it did not meet the ideals of Liberal Nationalism.

Of course, both visions were right. If the officers and men of the RCN had no doubts about their Canadian-ness, it is true that the RCN was not yet fully a Canadian institution. It was not for want of trying, however, and in many ways the Navy was very much a reflection of the evolving country it served. Several studies of the postwar RCN have noted that "some months after the publication of the [Mainguy] Report, the flag officer Atlantic Coast... had not yet mounted the 'Canada badges' on his own uniforms. The FOAC at that point was Admiral Mainguy."¹⁸ One added caustically that "It would

¹⁸ For example, Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol III, pp. 126-127, quoting Harbron, "The Uncertain Heritage," p. 322.

take more than a commission of inquiry to exorcize the Nelson spirit.”¹⁹ Doubtless, these same commentators would have been appalled to learn that Claxton marked the despatch of the west coast destroyer task group to Korea by delivery of a speech entitled, “The Nelson Touch.” Eight months before, newspapers had announced the publication of The Mainguy Report under headlines such as “Too much Nelson, not enough Canada” and “Naval tradition cause of three mutinies.” Now, as ships of the Canadian fleet were about to depart for battle, the defence minister ventured to distance himself from that popular interpretation:

What was, then, the “Nelson Touch”? An infinite attention to detail in preparation of plans and fitting of equipment; constant care for the welfare of his men; admission of officers and men into his confidence so as to make a team which could play almost without signals; obdurate refusal to be hide-bound by out-of-date tactics; and finally the courage and will to win that remain today the most fundamental military qualities - the “Nelson Touch”, and it was just what the Mainguy Committee and myself want to see in the Royal Canadian Navy and I believe it’s there.²⁰

Few Canadian naval officers would have disagreed with that sentiment, either in 1947 or in 1949, had they but the tools to put it into effect. Now, in the summer of 1950, they did, as even the defence minister admitted: “Of the report’s 41 recommendations, virtually half were already in effect [by the time it was submitted] and most of the others have since been carried out.”²¹

¹⁹ Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol III, p. 127.

²⁰ Audette Papers, vol 16-5, Claxton speech, “The Nelson Touch,” 4 July 1950, p. 19. Claxton had a copy sent to Audette, but without elaboration; there is no record on file of Audette’s reaction.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

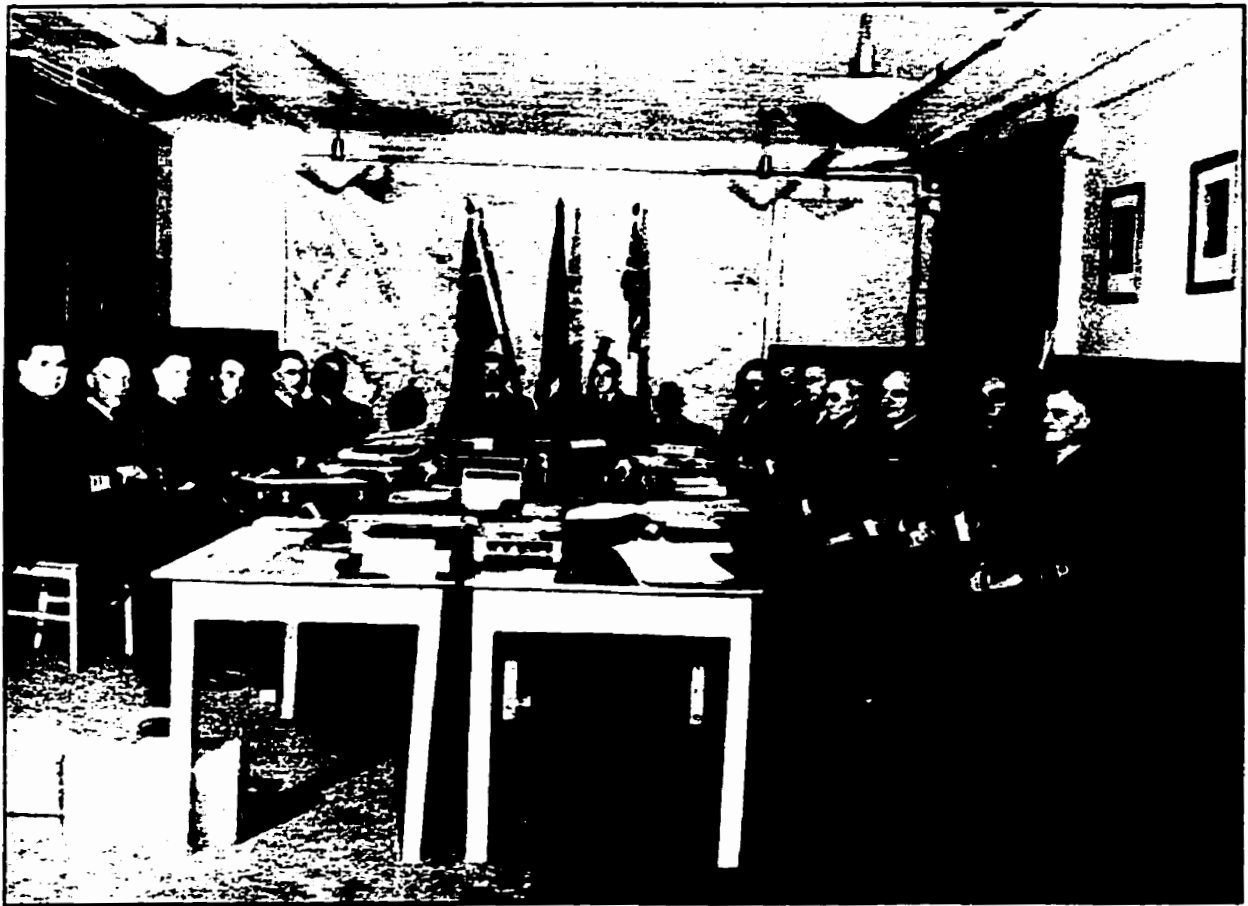


Figure 47: Senior Officers Conference, 29 January 1951. Seated at the head of the table centre are Claxton (left) and Grant. (CFPU, O-1694-1)



The mutinies which wracked the postwar Royal Canadian Navy did not affect Canada in the same way that rebellion in the fleets of Russia and Germany were major factors in the revolutions marking the withdrawal of those countries from the Great War a generation earlier. Still, the fundamental realignment of Canada's postwar fleet was very much a part of the change in direction the country was taking down the paths of domestic social and external diplomatic policy. They may not have realized it at the time, but the officers and men of the postwar RCN were part of the creation of what one historian has

styled "A National Navy."²² Each element of the story of *Crescent's* mission to China - the reflexive despatch of a destroyer to an overseas crisis, and then the exaggerated reaction to what were little more than another couple of incidents in a long-established tradition of protest - showed how deeply the Navy had penetrated the national political consciousness, as it never had before. No longer a Home Port Division of the Royal Navy, Canada had the Naval Service it wanted and deserved.

The strains of postwar demobilization and the restructuring of the new peacetime establishment were far more severe than has been appreciated by subsequent generations. The apparent breakdown in officer-man relationships, culminating in the incidents of February and March of 1949, was far more complex than can be explained by simply fixing blame upon an uncaring officer corps steeped in British ways. In a certain sense, the Mainguy Commission recognized this. But its determination to impose a more visible national identity on the Navy blinded it to reporting on conditions which actually were extent two years previous (in 1947). It failed to appreciate that the "incidents" in 1949 were really only that - discreet events - and not symptomatic of the widespread discontent which indeed had existed earlier.

The ability of a navy to respond to taskings from its government rests ultimately upon the state of its operational readiness. After the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy had been allowed to deteriorate to a serious level. Politicians, so responsive to the opinions and needs of the general populace, were either unaware or had

²² Marc Milner, [draft manuscript of new book on the history of the RCN], Chapter 9, "Toward a National Navy, 1945-1948," and Chapter 10, "A 'Made in Canada' Navy."

refused to hear of the Navy's problems. Naval officers as well, intent upon the larger question of survival of the service, had been diverted from the issues close to the sailors in the fleet, further compromising the preparedness of its ships. Certainly, the despatch of a single ship on a far-away mission was not of their choosing. Confronted with a new ministry determined to break with the past by embarking on a more activist foreign policy, the RCN could not but respond with other than the traditional "Ready, aye, ready." The consequence would be the ill-starred cruise of the *Crescent*. The benefit, within a few soul-searching years, would be a truly national fleet, reinvigorated to meet the challenges of the coming decades.

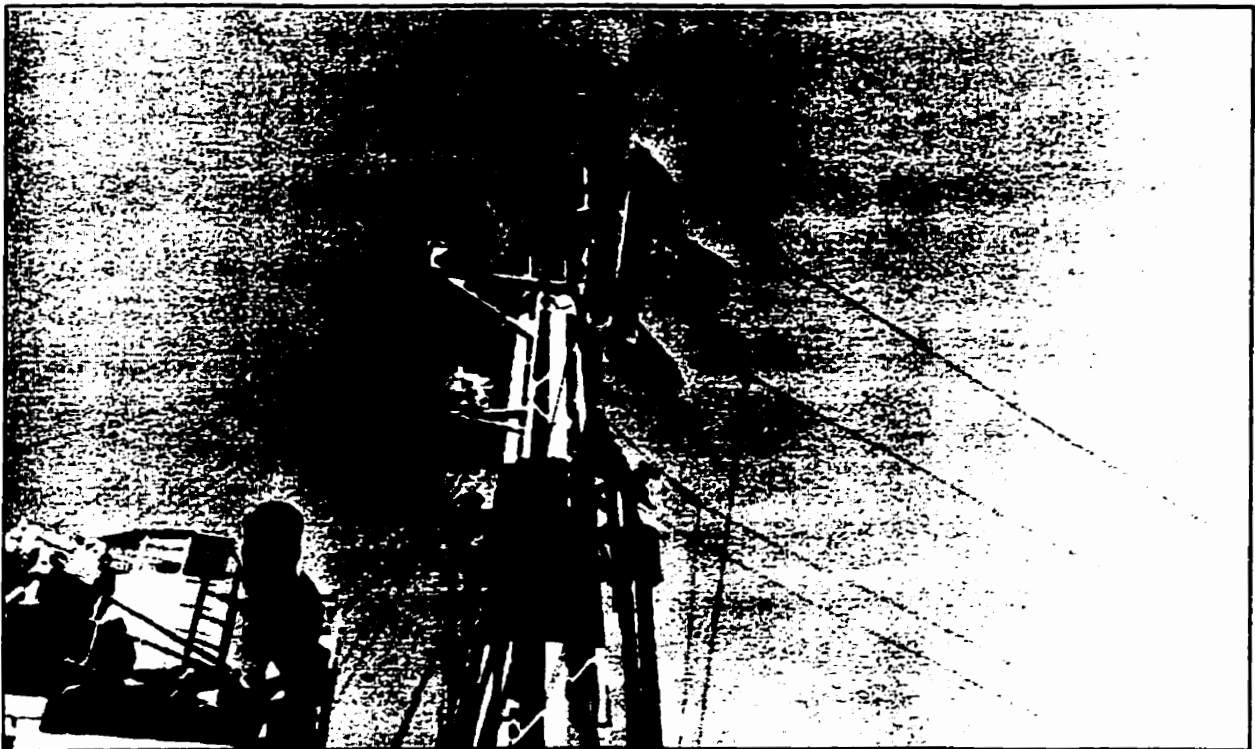
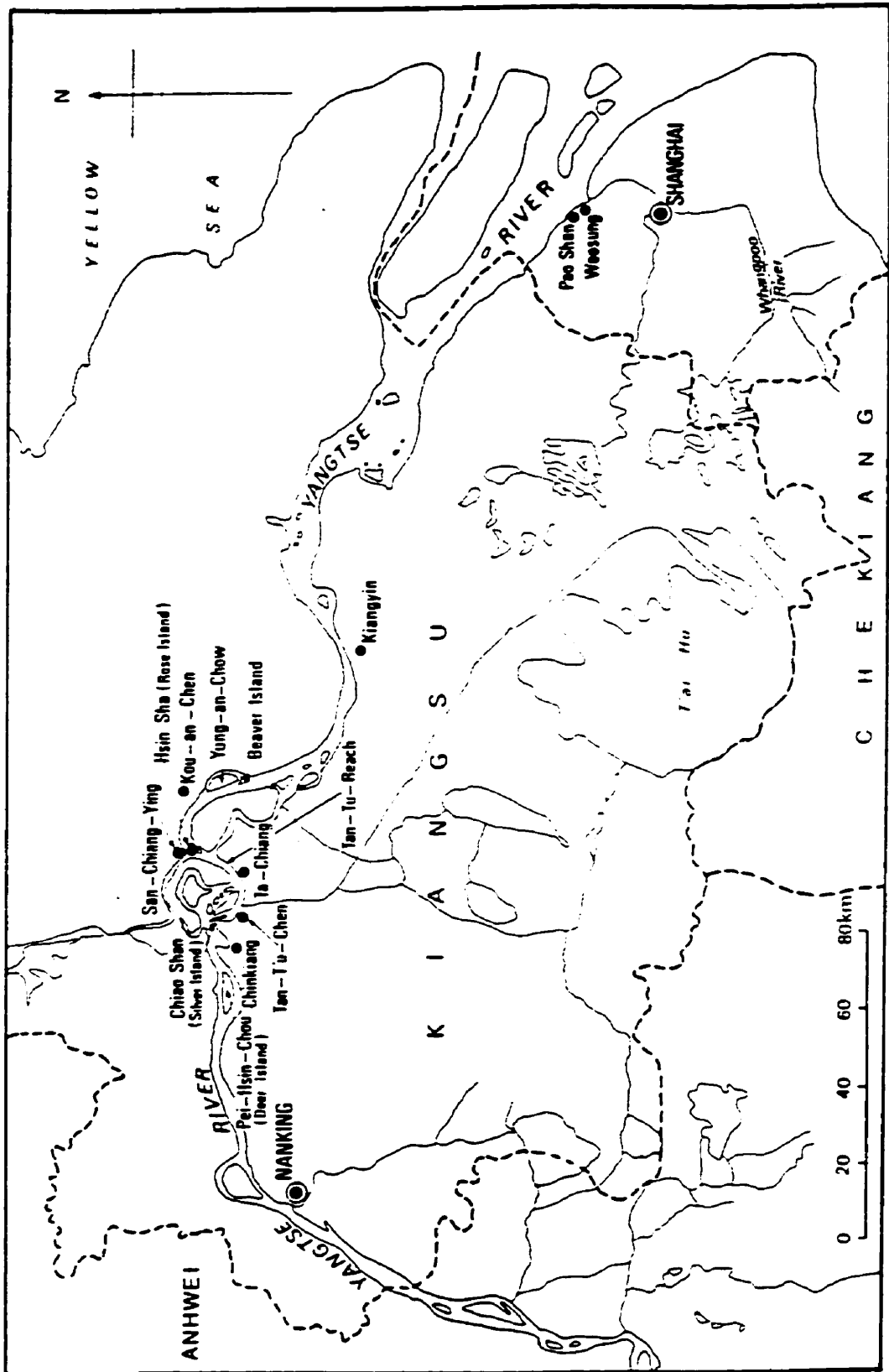


Figure 48: Masthead pennants reading, in Chinese characters, "Warship *Crescent*" (NAC, PA-176714).

Maps and Appendices

- Map 1 - The Pacific Basin, showing *Crescent's* westward track, February 1949
- Map 2 - The Course of the Lower Yangtze [from Murfett, Hostage on the Yangtze, p. 44]
- Appendix 1 - The Royal Canadian Navy, 1947 [silhouettes not to scale, from Jane's Fighting Ships, 1947]
- Appendix 2 - RCN Personnel Strength, 1939-1955
- Appendix 3 - RCN Ships in Commission, 1945-1955
- Appendix 4 - Comparative Table of Recommendations from "The Morale of the Navy Study" (1947) and The Mainguy Report (1949)



Map 2. The Course of the Lower Yangtze

[From Murfett, *Hostage on the Yangtze*]

Reprints page 78

Silhouettes, etc.—CANADA

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY.



JACK



NAVAL BOARD FLAG

*... Jack of the ...
... from a year ...
... handed to some ...
... of ...*

Governor-General: Field-Marshal the Rt. Hon. Viscount Alexander of Tunis, G.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C.
Minister of National Defence: The Hon. Brooke Claxton, K.C.
Deputy Minister of National Defence: Mr. C. M. Drury.

Naval Board.

Chief of the Naval Staff: Vice-Admiral H. T. W. Grant, C.B.E., D.S.O., R.C.N.
Vice-Chief of Naval Staff: Rear-Admiral F. L. Houghton, C.B.E., R.C.N.
Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Plans): Commodore H. N. Lay, O.B.E., R.C.N.
Chief of Naval Personnel: Commodore W. B. Creery, C.B.E., R.C.N.
Chief of Naval Technical Services: Rear-Admiral (E) J. G. Knowlton, O.B.E., R.C.N.
Secretary to the Naval Board: Captain (S) C. J. Dillon, R.C.N.
Additional Member: Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Air): Captain (P) C. N. Lentaigne, D.S.O., R.N.

Senior Canadian Naval Liaison Officer, London: Captain O. C. S. Robertson, G.M., R.D., R.C.N.

General Notes.

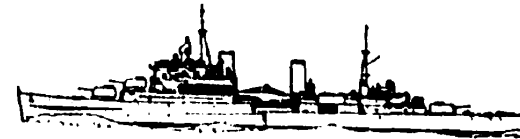
Navy Estimates, 1949-50: \$82,000,000.
Personnel (1949): 9,047 authorised, 7,164 actual. Reserves: 4,406 authorised, 4,300 actual.
Flags: Ships of the R.C.N. fly White Ensign, and usually have a green maple leaf painted on (fore) funnel.
Mercantile Marine: Lloyd's Register figures, July 1, 1948: 720 vessels of 1,367,434 tons gross.



MAGNIFICENT.



ONTARIO.



UGANDA.



FRIGATES



SILOUX.
ALGONQUIN (with mast between tubes abaft gun).



"TRIBAL" Class.



ST. STEPHEN.
(Weather Observation Ship.)



CRESCENT, also CRUSADER.

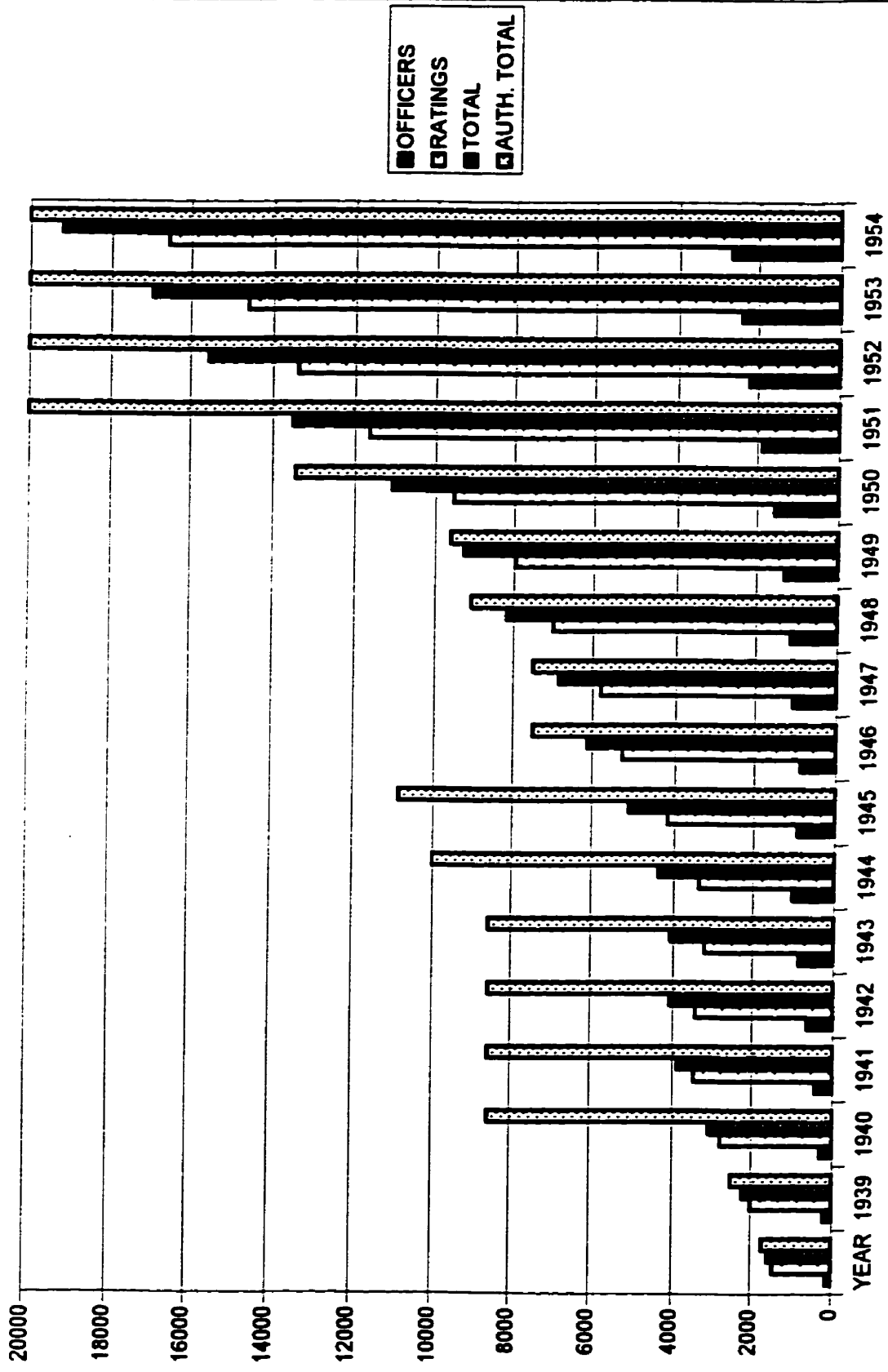


WINNIPEG Class.
(Represents NEW LISKEARD.)

Appendix 1

[From Jane's Fighting Ships, 1947.] [silhouettes not to scale]

Appendix 2 - RCN Strength, 1939-1955



RCN Actual Annual Strengths (End-FY)										
YEAR	Actual Strength at End-FY			Authorized Strength		AUTH. TOTAL	REF	NOTES		
	OFFICERS	RATINGS	TOTAL	OFFICERS	RATINGS					
1939	125	1434	1559	137	1582	1719	AR/40	AR/39 figs include 4 RN officers & 22 ratings on loan, for total of 1585 Actual strength derived from subtracting NL total from AR/54 total.		
1940	201	2001	2202	177	2322	2499	AR/41			
1941	288	2764	3052	771	7781	8552	AR/41 & AR/42			
1942	422	3452	3874	771	7781	8552	AR/42			
1943	641	3424	4065	771	7781	8552	AR/43			
1944	858	3201	4059	771	7781	8552	AR/44			
1945	1022	3347	4369	771	7781	10000	AR/45			
1946	927	4167	5094	1517	9344	10861	AR/47	AR/46, p. 16, reports 2,650 officers & 12,584 ratings (total=15,234) still serving at end-FY		
1947	860	5268	6128	1177	6323	7500	AR/47-48			
1948	1061	5796	6857	1177	6323	7500	AR/48			
1949	1137	7017	8154	1399	7648	9047	AR/50			
1950	1306	7953	9259	1399	8016	9600	AR/51			
1951	1555	9527	11082	2020	11420	13440	AR/51			
1952	1867	11638	13505			20000	AR/52			
1953	2173	13373	15546			20000	AR/53			
1954	2394	14561	16955			20000	AR/54			
1955	2655	16552	19207			20000	AR/55			
	19492	115475	134967			134967				



Appendix 2, Chart II: HMCS Crescent Ratings, Year of Recruitment

SHIP	YEAR - 1948												YEAR - 1949												YEAR - 1950											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
WARRIOR	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
MAGNIFICENT	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
UGANDA/QUEBEC	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ONTARIO	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
HURON	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
IROQUOIS	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
HAIDA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
MICMAC	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
NOOTKA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
CAYUGA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ATHABASKAN (ii)	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
SIoux	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ALGONQUIN	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
CRESCENT	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
CRUSADER	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ST STEPHEN	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ANTIGONISH	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
CHARLOTTETOWN	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
SWANSEA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
BEACON HILL	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
PRESTONIAN	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
(OTHER FRIGATES)	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
LABRADOR	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ST LAURENT	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
SAGUENAY	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
SKEENA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
OTTAWA (ii)	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
MARGAREE	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
FRASER	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ASSINIBOINE	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
CHAUDIERE	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
GATINEAU	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ST CROIX	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
RESTIGOUCHE	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
KOOTENAY	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
TERRA NOVA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
COLUMBIA	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
BAY CLASS (M/S)	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
TOTAL	9	9	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	12	12	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	

Key: L - laid down / outfitting; R - refit; r - reserve; 1 - [#] in commission.

SHIP	YEAR - 1951												YEAR - 1952												YEAR - 1953											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
WARRIOR	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
MAGNIFICENT	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
UGANDA /QUEBEC	r	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
ONTARIO	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
HURON	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
IROQUOIS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
HAIDA	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	
MICMAC	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
NOOTKA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CAYUGA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
ATHABASKAN (II)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
SIoux	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
ALGONQUIN	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	R	
CRESCENT	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CRUSADER	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
ST STEPHEN	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
ANTIGONISH	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CHARLOTTETOWN	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
SWANSEA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BEACON HILL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PRESTONIAN	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
(OTHER FRIGATES)	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	r	
LABRADOR	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
ST LAURENT	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
SAGUENAY	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
SKEENA	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
OTTAWA (II)	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
MARGAREE	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
FRASER	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
ASSINIBOINE	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
CHAUDIERE	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
GATINEAU	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
ST CROIX	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
RESTIGOUCHE	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
KOOTENAY	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
TERRA NOVA	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
COLUMBIA	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
BAY CLASS (MS)	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	
TOTAL	12	13	13	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	

Key: L - laid down / outfitting. R - refit. r - reserve. 1 - # in commission.

Appendix 4 - Comparative Table of Recommendations
 from "The Morale of the Navy Study" (1947) and The Mainguy Report (1949)²³

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
1. Set up agencies to advise and assist with the accommodation problem.	TB no	12. Advance the construction of adequate barrack accommodation and married quarters.
2. Introduce the cafeteria system of messing.	Yes, in course of refits (<i>Sioux</i>)	11. Extend bunking and cafeteria messing underway in <i>Sioux</i> throughout the fleet.
3. Instal laundry and pressing facilities in ships.		10. Esquimalt to get same facilities as Halifax.
4. Improve kit stowage in ships.		7. Accommodation for locker space be provided to allow men to change into civilian clothes on going ashore.
5. Improve washing and bathing facilities in ships.		
6. Implement the approved provision of sheets and pillows.	Yes	
7. Implement USN-style barber, tailor and shoe-repair facilities.		

²³ Recommendations from the Morale Study of 1947 are listed in original order of presentation, with the equivalents from The Mainguy Report given opposite. Unique recommendations are listed at the end. Some abbreviation has been used, but so much as possible, the original sense has been preserved.

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
8. Supply all ships and establishments with a reasonable outfit of appropriate modern labour-saving devices.	Yes	
9. Improve in every respect the supply, preparation and serving of food.	Yes, but...	
10. Bring the Cinema into ship life, and in the form of free entertainment.	Yes, but choice still limited	30. Greater attention should be paid to the issue of films. If necessary, subsidize from public funds.
11. Instruct all appointing and drafting authorities to keep moves to a minimum, particularly those that constitute a move away from the "Home Port".		
12. Investigate thoroughly the Trade-Group System and either modify or discard it.	Yes	* [sec 21, below]
13. Introduce a "cost-of-living allowance" to the Armed Services based on and fluctuating with the statistical index without affecting in any way the basic pay structure.	No, but raises to basic pay & allowances	
14. Investigate adjusting the present Income Tax on two-thirds of the value of an Allowance which is received "in kind" only.	Yes. MR, p.54.	27. Remove completely the income tax on Subsistence Allowance.
15. Re-introduce payment for Good Conduct Badges, preferably on a higher scale than previously.	TB no	20. Reintroduce Good Conduct Badges (with pay) to contribute to morale and the maintenance of discipline.

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
16. Improve the [ratings'] educational system, and reduce standard for entry by one grade.	Yes	
17. Introduce a common system for the indoctrination of New Entries to stimulate interest and pride in the Service.	Yes <i>Cornwallis</i> to be re-opened.	5. (a) Fully equip new entries with uniform and kit. (b) and (d) Greater emphasis on traditions of the Navy and history of the RCN. (c) Make living conditions in barracks a fair reflection of life at sea. (e) Take special care in selection of officer-in-charge. (f) Explain Divisional System more fully. (g) Establish Welfare Committees in training centres. (h) Leave period on conclusion of training. 4. All new recruits be classified as ordinary seamen with selection for branch of service towards the end of the period of new entry training.
18. Start a "Lower-Deck Magazine" and introduce news releases in the home towns of the personnel concerned.	Yes. <u>Crowsnest</u>	14. General service policy and information should be promulgated to the fleet before made subject of press releases.
19. Warn Officers that unless they measure up to a certain standard in the qualities of command and leadership, their services will be no longer required.	Yes	9(a). The practice of reading unfavourable remarks written in Confidential Reports [S.206] to officers be made mandatory. 24. Canadian Naval Officers should be instructed far more frequently and intensively in what constitutes the qualities of leadership.

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
20. The whole system of training Officers as <u>Officers</u> requires a great deal of improvement [discussion includes concept of Canadianization].	Yes. Summer training in <i>Crescent</i> extended to <i>Onatrio</i> [MR, p19, fn1]	[special emphasis throughout] 2. Establish one or more Canadian training ships for junior officers. 6. The training period at <i>Royal Roads</i> be lengthened, the practical and theoretical work be more closely integrated, and that it be followed by experience on Canadian training ships. 25. Additional in instruction in the humanities.
21. Prosecute the efforts to obtain Travelling Concessions with unremitting vigour.	TB no.	17. One free transportation warrant to the place of residence for the purpose of annual leave.
22. Improve the leave situation throughout the Service.		
23. Reintroduce the "Youths' Training Establishment" system for the training of New Entries.		
24. Introduce the Divisional System throughout the Service.	Yes. Div record-keeping improved, Div Course extended to CPOs.	[oblique - see 24 above] 6A. Improved and extended divisional training for chiefs and petty officers be established immediately.

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
25. Establish a system of recording every man's Officer potential, and facilitate commissioning from the ranks.	Yes. CFRs increase	9(b). [oblique] Regulations should specifically provide that unfavourable S.264s should be read to the men within a reasonable time before they leave their ships to give them an opportunity to make any representations they may have in connection with the criticisms.
26. Investigate the provision of Clubs and "Post Exchanges" for the men of the RCN.	TB no	29. American-style recreational facilities for men and their families be established on both Canadian coasts.
		1. The Naval complement should be increased, so that more trained men would be available for training others.
		3. The recruiting program should be thoroughly reviewed, more training be given recruiting officers and petty officers specializing in this activity, and standardized recruiting literature should be issued from NSHQ.
		8. Regulations be implemented requiring canteens to contribute a fixed per cent of profits to the RCN Benevolent Trust Fund [to support the dependents of wartime casualties].
		13. Relieve the undue burden of administrative detail on valuable officers by adopting the British [Admiralty] system of a Civil Service.

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
		15. Naval authorities be invited to consider the question of abolishing alcoholic drinks on board ships and to report thereon to the Minister.
		16. Harmonize the Naval payment with the policy of free renewals of kit in effect in the Army and RCAF.
		18. Medical care for immediate dependents be provided at greatly reduced cost.
		19. The present Marriage Allowance be extended to officers and men who are supporting or partially supporting their parents, based upon the degree of dependency.
		21. The payment of Charge Money to men of the Engineering Branch be re-introduced.
	Yes. NSHQ Directorate of Service Conditions and Welfare established, April 1949.	22. The rules and regulations affecting Welfare Committees be revised to permit freer discussion between officers and men over all matters of welfare; welfare should be more broadly defined to include all living conditions and any other matters within the ship that are within the decision and discretion of the Captain or his Second-in-Command; Minutes of every Welfare Committee e reviewed by NSHQ; and Captains of ships should be encouraged to hold occasional "Town Hall" meetings.

MORALE STUDY (1947) RECOMMENDATION	ACTION (1947-48)	MAINGUY REPORT (1949) RECOMMENDATION
		23. The routines for each class of ship be standardized throughout the Navy [especially between coasts]. Where there are changes, the reasons should be made known to the crew by the Commanding Officer.
		24. The notable lack of human understanding between officers and men, apparent in the form of an artificial superiority imported from another land, should be rationalized with modern political, social and economic conditions of post-war Canada.
		26. The words "Canada" or "Royal Canadian Navy" be used as shoulder flashes on the uniforms of all ranks; and, the practice of painting distinguishing maple leaves on ships' funnels be re-instituted.
		28. Opportunities and facilities for recreation afloat be provided [hobby shops, sing-songs, libraries, film lectures, etc]; and, a trained director of community recreation be appointed to larger ships.

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