

# From Pariahs to Patriots: Canadian Communists and the Second World War

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**ABSTRACT:** Official anti-communist policies, adopted by the Mackenzie King government during the Second World War, were only partially effective. These policies were implemented by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and the armed forces high command, and included internment, banning the Communist Party of Canada (CPC), and monitoring communists in the armed forces. These policies, however, were thwarted by the logic of the war, as well as by opposition from liberal public opinion and the communists themselves.

Towards the end of the Second World War, the Mounties were hunting for Bill Walsh, a known communist serving in the Canadian army. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) wanted to know if there was any danger of Walsh "leading the Canadian troops over to join the Russians."<sup>1</sup> Walsh's trail led an RCMP major to an army battalion engaged in the assault on Germany's Siegfried Line. Making his way across mud-churned fields to a cellar headquarters, the Mountie discovered that the battalion's intelligence officer was none other than private Bill Walsh. The Mountie promptly conferred with Walsh's commanding officer, but the CO did not share the RCMP's concerns. According to Walsh, after "the Mountie left our headquarters our men started firing in the air and he had to crawl most of the half mile back to the jeep on his belly."<sup>2</sup>

As a civilian, Bill Walsh had been a member of the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) and an organizer for the United Auto Workers (UAW) in Windsor, Ontario. Walsh had also been interned from 1940 to 1942, because of his membership in the CPC. After his release from internment, Walsh was forbidden to leave Windsor and was required to report regularly to the RCMP. Yet Walsh joined the Canadian

Army in 1943, and violated the conditions of his release by travelling to Normandy and neglecting to report to the Mounties from the front. Apparently, the RCMP wanted to find their man.<sup>3</sup>

Walsh's tale may be apocryphal, but it illustrates the knot of contradictions in the relationship between Canadian communists and the Canadian state during the Second World War. On the basis of its early opposition to the war, the CPC was banned in 1940. Many of its members were arrested and interned.<sup>4</sup> After Nazi Germany invaded the USSR in June 1941, the CPC switched gears to support the war. The Canadian government eventually allowed communists to reorganize as the Labor-Progressive Party (LPP). The CPC, however, remained officially proscribed for the war's duration, but communist internees were released in 1942.<sup>5</sup>

This reflected an uneasy truce between Canadian communists and the state after 1941. The LPP urged total war mobilization and many communists, including former internees like Bill Walsh, joined the armed forces.<sup>6</sup> Anti-communists in the government, however, were deeply suspicious of the new communist enthusiasm, and they were extremely reluctant to relax security measures aimed at controlling communist activity. The RCMP and military officials were especially worried about communist subversion in the armed forces. They made continued efforts to control the activity of all known communist enlistees.<sup>7</sup> The logic of the war, however, produced a gap between official anti-communism and the demands of prosecuting the war, and this curbed efforts to restrict communist participation in the war effort.

### The Defense of Canada Regulations

German armies invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. The Canadian government, under Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and the Liberal Party, invoked the War Measures Act and proclaimed the Defense of Canada Regulations (DOCR). A week later, on 10 September, Mackenzie King's government declared war on Germany.

The War Measures Act gave the Canadian government sweeping authority, and the DOCR expanded that power further, allowing the exercise of extreme security measures, such as the waiving of habeas corpus and public trial, internment, bans on political and religious groups, restrictions on free speech, and the confiscation of property.<sup>8</sup>

The DOCR were intended to suppress obstacles to mobilizing Canadians in support of the war. They were applied to individuals and organizations who supported fascist Germany and Italy, as well as to so-called enemy aliens: citizens and immigrants of German, Italian, and Japanese descent.<sup>9</sup> The regulations were also used to suppress those who opposed the war without actually sympathizing with the enemy, or who might otherwise subvert the war effort. This included communists and left-wing ethnic organizations, Technocracy Incorporated, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and individuals, including union leaders, sailors, and well-known public figures like the mayor of Montreal, Camillien Houde, who opposed conscription.<sup>10</sup>

The DOCR did not appear overnight. With an eye to the growing threat of war in Europe, a government committee began drafting the regulations in March 1938, and submitted a report to King in July 1939.<sup>11</sup> The committee unanimously recommended adoption of all the DOCR provisions, except number 21 which allowed for preventive detention and internment by ministerial order. While some committee members argued that Regulation 21 was too draconian, other members, such as RCMP Inspector Charles Rivett-Carnac, saw the measure as essential to national security.<sup>12</sup>

Although Canada was not at war with the Soviet Union, many government officials regarded the USSR as an "unofficial' enemy."<sup>13</sup> This attitude became especially prominent after August 1939 when Germany and the USSR signed a non-aggression pact, and after Soviet troops occupied western Poland on 17 September 1939.<sup>14</sup> Given the close ties between the CPC and the Soviet Union, it is no surprise that the RCMP and government officials regarded Canadian communists as a threat to national security. Yet, as Reg Whitaker argues, this explanation for suppressing Canadian communists "wears

thin when considered against the reluctance to release [communist internees]" and legalize the CPC after the USSR became an official ally against Hitler.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, well before the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939, many officials defined Canadian communists as an enemy — even the main enemy.<sup>16</sup>

Official anti-communism was ultimately based on ideological considerations, and the outbreak of the war created the conditions which allowed the state to lump communists with pro-fascists as security threats subject to the DOCR.<sup>17</sup> It is probable that this attitude was nowhere more entrenched than in the RCMP. Inspector Rivett-Carnac, who helped draft the DOCR, certainly saw communists as the main threat to Canadian security. As chief of the RCMP's intelligence section, Rivett-Carnac argued in early 1939 that fascism was a lesser threat than communism since fascism was a "modified form of capitalism."<sup>18</sup>

Rivett-Carnac's opinion corresponded with the anti-communist and anti-labour views of RCMP Commissioner S.T. Wood, who argued later in 1941 that, "it is not the Nazi nor the Fascist but the radical who constitutes our most troublesome problem."<sup>19</sup> Although the charges were never substantiated, as early as October 1939 the RCMP *Security Bulletin* claimed that "there is more reason to fear ... acts of espionage and sabotage on the part of the Communist Party than from Nazi or Fascist organizations."<sup>20</sup> The RCMP asserted that communists were using unions as fronts for infiltration and sabotage.<sup>21</sup> By November 1939, the RCMP was urging the government to outlaw the CPC.<sup>22</sup>

There were, however, varying degrees of anti-communism within government circles. Senior civil servants like Norman Robertson and Jack Pickersgill argued that the RCMP over-emphasized the communist threat. In October 1939, Pickersgill warned Mackenzie King that the RCMP failed to distinguish between "legitimate social and political criticism and subversive doctrine," as well as between "facts and hearsay."<sup>23</sup> Both Pickersgill and Robertson urged the RCMP to focus more attention on the fascist threat.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, key cabinet members (including Ernest Lapointe, Louis St. Laurent, and C.D. Howe) strongly endorsed the RCMP's attitude.

Prime Minister Mackenzie King was more equivocal, veering between a tendency towards liberal moderation and a deep antipathy to communism. King had been appalled by the Nazi-Soviet pact, and this had deepened his distrust of the USSR, and of communists in general.<sup>25</sup> Nor did King have any sympathy for the activities of Canadian communists. In addition to distrusting the loyalty of the CPC, King regarded the Party as an obstacle to government efforts to “keep things on an even keel ... between labour and capital.”<sup>26</sup> Moreover, King repeatedly expressed his concern that the war would unleash the threat of world-wide socialist revolution.<sup>27</sup>

Mackenzie King was prepared to countenance repressive actions against the CPC, but he regarded the measures advocated by Justice Minister Ernest Lapointe and the RCMP as extreme and reactionary. King approved when communist newspapers were shut down in mid-November 1939 for publishing anti-war propaganda. He believed that communists “are our real enemies and we must not allow subversive activities to gain headway at this time.”<sup>28</sup> King, however, did reject an order-in-council proposed by Lapointe for suppressing subversive activities. He favoured the principle, but worried that parliamentary foes like the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and New Democracy might gain political capital in opposing such a move. The PM was inclined to be more cautious. He felt that existing state powers were sufficient, and argued that “the men who drafted the order had gone much too far. I said frankly I did not trust the judgement of the Mounted Police on these matters.”<sup>29</sup> King later expressed surprise at how reactionary Lapointe was “prepared to become.”<sup>30</sup>

In late November 1939, RCMP Commissioner Wood also pressed King for expanded powers to fight communist subversion. Wood warned that the CPC was plotting with the German government to foment an uprising in Mexico, using recruits selected from Canadian veterans of the Spanish Civil War.<sup>31</sup> The PM, however, once again insisted that RCMP powers were already sufficient.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, emergency legislation had given the RCMP an expanded role and new powers. The RCMP Intelligence Section

increased from six to more than 100 officers.<sup>33</sup> RCMP Commissioner Wood was named Registrar General of Enemy Aliens, and empowered to intern enemy aliens and subversives.<sup>34</sup> The RCMP was represented on the Joint Intelligence Committee, along with the External Affairs Department, the Army, Navy, and Air Force. Finally, in addition to guarding sensitive industrial sites and armed forces bases, the RCMP was asked to vet security clearances of armed forces personnel.<sup>35</sup>

### Banning the Communist Party

The CPC was officially suppressed in May 1940, when it was declared illegal by an Ottawa judge at a trial of three communists charged with “printing and distributing subversive literature.”<sup>36</sup> The accused included a Canadian Army Service Force member, a civil servant, and a newspaper employee, but only one of the defendants was convicted.<sup>37</sup> On 6 June 1940, the King cabinet issued an order-in-council banning the CPC, the Young Communist League (YCL), and thirteen other organizations, including left-wing ethnic groups.<sup>38</sup>

The RCMP began arresting suspected communists who were to be held “for the duration” at internment camps in Kananaskis, Alberta, in Petawawa, Ontario, and at an unused jail in Hull, Quebec. The RCMP cast its net broadly. Its officers were empowered to act as “justices of the peace for the purpose of issuing search warrants.” They were to arrest any members of the banned organizations, as well as anyone who “distributed their literature, or spoke publicly on their behalf.”<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, “anyone ‘who advocates or defends the acts, principles or policies’ of these organizations would be presumed guilty—‘in the absence of proof to the contrary.’”<sup>40</sup> Thus the RCMP arrested some prominent CPC members, but it also interned persons who had little or nothing to do with the communist movement.<sup>41</sup> All this ultimately led to the internment of 133 persons accused of being communists, and another 120 short-term detentions.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, however, the RCMP failed to arrest the top leadership of the CPC, including

its leader, Tim Buck, who had slipped across the border into the United States.<sup>43</sup>

Although the CPC was banned in May 1940, repression began in November 1939 when the communist newspapers *The Clarion* and *Clarté* were closed after abandoning their brief pro-war editorial policies.<sup>44</sup> When hostilities first broke out in Europe, CPC leaders perceived the conflict as an extension of their anti-fascist struggles in the 1930s. In *The Clarion*, Tim Buck argued that communists should “strive to combine with the military defeat of Hitler ... the political defeat of his reactionary friends at home.”<sup>45</sup> Similar positions were taken by the communist parties of France and Great Britain.<sup>46</sup>

The CPC's initial pro-war line, however, was very short-lived. On 18 September 1939, the Comintern issued a directive instructing all communist parties to oppose the war and expose its imperialist character.<sup>47</sup> This sparked a debate in the CPC leadership, leading to a reversal of policy in mid-October. The party leadership now concluded that the war was an imperialist conflict, similar to the First World War. They doubted that the Allies were sincerely anti-fascist. As Buck now argued, “the British and French governments are not willing to join in a life-and-death struggle against Hitler and, therefore, on moral grounds and by its own logic, we must oppose [the war].”<sup>48</sup> The CPC began publicizing its new demand that Canada withdraw from the war in favour of neutrality. At the same time the King government launched a general suppression of left-wing and radical publications.<sup>49</sup>

Buck admitted afterwards that the CPC “took positions and repeated arguments ... from the [Comintern], rather than analyzing them strictly on the basis of Canadian conditions. We made some mistakes as a result.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, by endorsing the Comintern's anti-war directive, the CPC invited disaster. The party's sudden volte-face resulted in an indefensible policy which isolated communists in the labour movement and in the court of public opinion. It also played into the hands of anti-communists who were eager to grasp a chance to crush the communist movement. The CPC avoided the fate of the communist parties in Britain and France, which suffered

serious splits over the policy reversal. The new line, however, did provoke a factional struggle in the CPC leadership from 1940 to 1941 over whether an anti-war policy meant revolutionary defeatism or simple neutrality.

Admittedly, the anti-fascist credentials of the Mackenzie King government were less than sterling. Between 1935 and 1939, Canada's foreign policy had been relatively isolationist, seeking to avoid foreign entanglements. Communists argued that King's policies had the effect of encouraging the rise of fascism in Europe: by failing to act against the Italian fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, by refusing to support the Spanish Republican government from 1936-39 against General Franco's fascist uprising, and by supporting the British policy of appeasing Hitler's territorial ambitions. In fact, the communists suspected that Britain and its allies were striving to turn Hitler's aggression towards the USSR.<sup>51</sup>

With respect to Mackenzie King, it is more accurate to say that the PM had an extremely myopic view of the fascist threat up to the moment that the war began. By October 1939, King regarded Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini as totalitarian dictators cut from the same cloth.<sup>52</sup> Previously, King had admired Hitler as a patriot and an anti-communist counterweight in Europe, and he clung tenaciously to a policy of appeasement through the summer of 1939.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, King believed the British were provoking Hitler into an avoidable conflict by abandoning appeasement. King was deeply distressed by British and French guarantees to defend Poland.<sup>54</sup> As late as 21 August 1939, King was convinced that the only hope of avoiding war "is in Hitler himself, that he really does not want unnecessarily to destroy human life."<sup>55</sup>

King's myopia began to evaporate in September 1939, but even then the Canadian government did not declare war in order to fight fascism. J.L. Granatstein has noted that "Canada had gone to war in September 1939 because Britain had gone to war and for no other reason. It was not a war for Poland; it was not a war against anti-Semitism; it was not even a war against Nazism."<sup>56</sup> Mackenzie King's government did not perceive the war as an anti-fascist struggle

until “the character of the war altered to pose a direct threat to Britain and [North America].”<sup>57</sup>

In choosing to oppose the war, however, the CPC closed its eyes to the anti-fascist potential of the conflict. The Party placed itself in a position where its energies would inevitably be spent fighting for its existence rather than against the fascist enemy. After publishing the party’s anti-war policy, *The Clarion* was closed and its business manager, Douglas Stewart, was arrested on 15 November 1939, for contravening the DOCR. *Clarté* was also closed.<sup>58</sup> The communists, however, had anticipated the government move. When its newspapers were suppressed, communist leaders implemented a plan for taking their 16,000 members underground.<sup>59</sup>

Well-known party leaders went into hiding, while new party organizations were set up by members who were less well-known.<sup>60</sup> Party branches were re-organized into small cells which were again subdivided when a maximum of seven members was reached.<sup>61</sup> Its members provided their homes as meeting places and safe houses for party leaders. To avoid attracting attention, comrades were given staggered times to arrive at meetings.<sup>62</sup> Party materials were published clandestinely, including leaflets and issues of *The Clarion* and *Clarté*.<sup>63</sup> In January 1940, the CPC launched an unofficial paper, the *Canadian Tribune*, which carefully sought to maintain legal status. In addition to known communists such as A.A. MacLeod and author Margaret Fairley, the *Canadian Tribune* editorial board boasted well-known non-communists, such as R.L. Calder (a lawyer and CCF member) and R.A.C. Ballantyne (head of the Montreal branch of the Canadian Civil Liberties Union).<sup>64</sup> The *Canadian Tribune* was briefly suspended only once, moving the RCMP to complain in March 1940 that “[there] is little in the average issue which is definitely anti-British. It is rather in the clever headlines, the well-edited excerpts from reputable papers, that it insinuates against our system.”<sup>65</sup>

When the internment of suspected communists began in May 1940, the Political Bureau of the CPC ordered its top three leaders into exile in the USA. Party leader Tim Buck,

Sam Carr, and Charles Sims headed south. The rest of the Political Bureau, including Stewart Smith, Leslie Morris, and Stanley Ryerson, were also in hiding, but they remained in Canada to run the party's Operating Centre in Montreal.<sup>66</sup> Although these arrangements kept the party leadership out of RCMP hands, geographical separation and isolation led to serious policy differences. In a journal published in New York and distributed clandestinely in Canada, the exiled party leaders argued against revolutionary defeatism. Buck and his companions insisted that the CPC continue to advocate neutrality between the belligerents and advised party members to concentrate on organizing unions and a wage-hike movement.<sup>67</sup> Smith and the Operating Centre, however, moved in an extremist direction. They denounced Canada's "colonial" relationship to Britain, and suggested that the country was approaching a revolution for independence and socialism.<sup>68</sup>

From August 1940 to June 1941, the CPC suffered from acute political split personality as the leadership factions battled over party policy. The New York centre was supported by communist union leaders and activists, the *Canadian Tribune*, and Dorise Nielsen who was elected to the House of Commons in March 1940 as a popular front MP from Saskatchewan. It is harder to gauge the support for the Operating Centre, although their position was published in occasional issues of *The Clarion*, as well in leaflets produced for mass distribution. On the other hand, it is clear that the Smith faction had little support among party members by March 1941. The Operating Centre toned down its rhetoric and began to call for the election of an "independent people's government" and an independent foreign policy.<sup>69</sup>

Neither the RCMP nor the government showed any awareness of the struggle over the party's anti-war policy. Nor is it likely they would have cared. To Wood, communists were all the same and he wanted them all interned. In April 1941, Wood complained publicly that, while "the enemy alien is usually recognizable ... your 'Red' has the protection of citizenship" and is therefore "much more difficult to suppress."<sup>70</sup> Radical groups had already been banned and

more than a hundred communists had been interned, but Wood felt that repressive measures were still too lenient. He demanded sterner measures to root out communists from front organizations like youth councils, civil liberties groups, and unions.<sup>71</sup> Wood argued that many of the interned “trade union leaders were also Communist leaders who were using their unions to advance their own and their party’s ends by sabotaging industry and transportation.”<sup>72</sup>

The King government was being pressed by the RCMP, the media, and manufacturers, to mount greater repression against radicals and communists. In part, this stemmed from the very serious nature of the war in 1941. Since the collapse of France in June 1940, Britain and the Commonwealth faced the Axis powers alone. They had suffered severe military reversals, and by the spring of 1941 Britain was enduring the heaviest German air bombardment of the war.<sup>73</sup> On the home front, the King government faced mounting labour-shortages, and growing union militancy as workers demanded wage hikes and legislation to enforce compulsory collective bargaining.<sup>74</sup>

At the outset of the war, the Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) and the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL), which included the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) unions, pledged support for the war effort.<sup>75</sup> But pledges did not translate into firm no-strike promises. Wartime inflation from 1939-41 eroded wages, and when combined with labour shortages, this sparked an upsurge in union organizing and militancy from 1941-43.<sup>76</sup> In line with Mackenzie King’s theories on labour relations, the government pursued a policy of non-binding conciliation, which often as not resulted in defeats and “paper victories” for the union movement.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, unions regarded the DOCR as a weapon that was used by employers and police to undermine strikes and block efforts to organize unions. In December 1939, Canadian CIO secretary C.H. Millard—who was far from being a communist—was arrested for telling steelworkers in Timmins, Ontario, that “[we] should have democracy here in Canada before we go to Europe to defend it.”<sup>78</sup> Unions also objected that the DOCR were being used to charge picketing union

members with “loitering” and to detain hundreds of union sailors.<sup>79</sup> Left-led unions in the TLC and the CCL were the most vocal critics of the DOCR and the lack of compulsory collective bargaining, but they were not alone.<sup>80</sup>

On the other side, big business pushed its point of view with equal vigour. In May 1941, the Canadian Manufacturing Association (CMA) met the War Cabinet Committee, and echoed Wood’s call for tougher repression. The CMA claimed that the CIO was communist-controlled and that it cared “little what damage is done to Canada’s war effort, provided they secure the power they seek.” The manufacturers demanded stringent measures against the CIO and a ban on strikes and lockouts.<sup>81</sup> The CMA view was amplified three weeks later when members of the War Cabinet Committee (J.L. Ralston, Angus Macdonald, C.D. Howe, and others) pressed for a ban on American CIO representatives, and for repeal of the eight-hour day.<sup>82</sup>

Mackenzie King resisted, although he concurred with the anti-communist sentiments of the CMA and his cabinet colleagues. King argued that such strict measures, however, would play into the hands of communists and radicals. He insisted that it was wiser to rely on voluntary conciliation to resolve labour disputes. King felt this would strengthen the hand of labour leaders like Tom Moore of the TLC, who was a Liberal and a friend of the PM. This, King believed, would counter-balance the hostility of CIO and CCL unions towards the government.<sup>83</sup>

The King cabinet and the RCMP believed that communists were the main threat to achieving labour peace. In the spring and summer of 1941, the RCMP reported that “the CPC is concentrating its efforts in the Trade Union field,” and that the party is “exerting its efforts to make the industrial population ... strike-conscious.” The RCMP claimed that a handful of “communist agitators” had organized eight strikes in April, and that these walk-outs were “precursors of an epidemic.” The RCMP believed that the CIO was the main vehicle of communist “infiltration,” although the party was active in the TLC as well.<sup>84</sup>

Communists were active in the union movement, but they were more successful in organizing workers on economic issues than in popularizing the party's anti-war position (except in Quebec, where communist policy found a limited resonance in the anti-war and anti-conscription sentiments that existed in that province).<sup>85</sup> Communists were not only active rank-and-file union members, but leaders and organizers of unions like the Canadian Seamens' Union (CSU), the United Electrical Workers (UEW), the International Woodworkers of America (IWA), the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC), and the UAW.

The RCMP, however, erred in its conclusions and failed to grasp the fact that the communists made little headway in shifting the pro-war position of labour.<sup>86</sup> Whatever the influence and accuracy of RCMP reports, King and his cabinet decided to continue hunting communists in the unions. Although communists were a minority in the labour movement, they were strong enough in strategic wartime industries to cause concern to the government.

When they were interned in 1940, communists like Bill Walsh and Dick Steele were organizing automobile and steel workers.<sup>87</sup> Also in 1940, Pat Sullivan, CSU leader, was interned while in the midst of contract negotiations.<sup>88</sup> Charles Murray, leader of the Fishermen and Fish Handlers' Union in Nova Scotia, was also interned as his union was beginning contract negotiations.<sup>89</sup> On 20 June 1941, little more than a month after the CMA meeting with the War Cabinet Committee, the RCMP picked up UEW president, C.S. Jackson, on direct orders from the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Munitions and Supply. At the time, the UEW was in the middle of a strike at the Toronto General Electric Plant and a union organizing drive at the Westinghouse facility in Hamilton, Ontario.<sup>90</sup>

Concurrently with the arrests of communist union leaders, the King cabinet carried out an investigation of Dorise Nielsen, the sole communist MP until the election of Fred Rose in 1943. Nielsen was elected in 1940 as a Unity candidate in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, and her campaign had been supported by local communists and

disaffected members of both the CCF and Social Credit parties.<sup>91</sup> In May 1940, King had been charmed by his first meeting with Nielsen, whom he regarded as “a woman of real ability.” Nielsen’s radicalism reminded King of the attitudes he once had “held so strongly” in his youth.<sup>92</sup>

A month later King, however, regarded Nielsen as a threat to the country’s security. In June 1940, Nielsen spoke in Parliament against the Emergency Powers Bill and the banning of the CPC. Afterwards, King was shown information “which indicated she is a Communist and her husband a Communist.” As a result, King concluded that Nielsen was a “dangerous person,” and that she had “all the qualities of a very skilful spy.” King promptly ordered the Justice Department to investigate her.<sup>93</sup>

Nielsen was a thorn in the side of the King government. In the House of Commons, she maintained a steady barrage of opposition to government measures, including the internment of communists and labour leaders. Outside Parliament, she joined with another communist, the Reverend A.E. Smith, to launch a campaign by the National Council of Democratic Rights (NCDR) against the internment of anti-fascists. Nielsen’s public meetings drew large audiences, and the RCMP kept a close eye on her activities.<sup>94</sup> In August 1940, the RCMP seized a pamphlet that Nielsen published to explain why she opposed the federal budget.<sup>95</sup> In March 1941, the *Canadian Tribune* was closed after publishing a series of anti-internment articles by Nielsen. At about the same time, the RCMP investigated another Nielsen pamphlet, which re-printed one of her speeches in Parliament. The *Canadian Tribune* had also published this pamphlet, and the RCMP used the occasion to search the offices of the *Canadian Tribune* and Eveready Printers, and to seize documents.<sup>96</sup>

At a meeting on 8 May 1941, the War Cabinet Committee devoted its time to criticizing Nielsen. RCMP harassment had failed to deter her, and the cabinet considered other measures to restrain the recalcitrant MP. True to form, King suggested that “the best way to destroy [Nielsen’s] influence was to get

another woman into Parliament who could answer her." To this end, King tried to engineer the nomination of a Mrs. Casselman to contest a federal by-election in Edmonton, Alberta.<sup>97</sup>

### Fighting to Get Into the War

The attitude of the CPC to the war took another sharp turn when Germany invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. The party immediately adopted a pro-war policy. According to Tim Buck, who secretly returned to Canada in August 1941, the invasion eliminated the communist fear of a "compromise peace between Hitler and the Allies." Britain and the Commonwealth were forced into an alliance with the Soviet Union, and this now made "the extirpation of fascism" possible. For communists, the "outcome of the war [was] dependant upon whether socialism was victorious" in the war against Hitler and fascism.<sup>98</sup> The party opted to mobilize for total war, but it had enormous obstacles to surmount: it was illegal, its newspapers had been suppressed, some of its leaders were still in exile or in hiding, and many of its members were interned. They would have to fight to get into the war.

The government regarded the new communist policy with disbelief and suspicion. Mackenzie King was enormously relieved by the Soviet entry into the war. King recognized that it brought a favourable change in the balance of military forces, but he also hoped an alliance with the USSR would "lessen communist activities on this continent."<sup>99</sup> Yet King was not prepared to legalize the CPC, agreeing with the RCMP that the new communist attitude was "'too good to be true,' and [that] it certainly calls for ... evidence of sincerity before it can be accepted."<sup>100</sup> King was prepared to give communists some room for public activity. But he doggedly resisted demands to revoke the ban on the CPC and release interned communists, demands which came from communists as well as unions, civil libertarians, some of the media, the CCF, and from within government and Liberal Party circles.

The communist internees and the left-wing NCDR, mounted a persistent and vocal campaign for their release, seizing every chance to demand their separation from enemy POWs and Canadian fascist sympathizers, with whom they were interned at Kananaskis and Petawawa. Communists proved to be nettlesome for the internment camp authorities. One internee, Ben Swankey, recalled that the communists at Kananaskis were initially housed with the German POWs, one communist to eleven Germans in each hut. It was a situation that gave rise to a great deal of tension. Finally, after failing to convince the camp commandant to provide them with a hut of their own, the communists simply seized a newly-built and still-unoccupied hut.<sup>101</sup>

In July 1941, authorities moved the communist internees from Kananaskis to Petawawa, where fascists were held along with communists. Petawawa was the scene of a serious confrontation during the visit by Timothy Eden (brother of the British Foreign Secretary) in early August 1941. When the internees assembled for inspection, Joe Wallace, a well-known communist poet, stepped forward to announce to Eden that anti-fascists were being held at the camp. Wallace was sent to an isolation hut, and the communists responded with a demonstration. The commandant summoned nearby army troops and ordered the protesters to disperse. Then, on 20 August 1941, the communists were transferred to an empty jail in Hull.<sup>102</sup>

There, the communists peppered the government with letters demanding their release so that they could help mobilize "for all-out economic and military participation in the war to defeat Hitler[']s]Germany."<sup>103</sup> In the meantime, support for legalizing the CPC and releasing the internees gathered steam. Lester Pearson and Norman Robertson felt that the communists should be fully harnessed to the war effort.<sup>104</sup> Liberals like A.R.M. Lower were active in moderate civil liberties associations which distanced themselves from the "far left," but which opposed detentions.<sup>105</sup> Support for the communist campaign also emerged from surprising quarters. Ontario Liberal Premier Mitchell Hepburn, a bitter anti-communist and union-basher, lobbied King for the

communists and even shared the platform with Tim Buck in October 1942 at a war mobilization rally at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.<sup>106</sup>

The campaign crossed the US border in the fall of 1941, when James Carey of the American CIO visited the Canadian Legation in Washington and protested the internment of Canadian UEW leader C.S. Jackson. The CIO lobby was followed by a letter from the US Department of State which "advised" the Canadian government that Jackson's internment was complicating a struggle in the American CIO between isolationist unions and those, like the UEW, who supported Roosevelt's lend-lease policy.<sup>107</sup>

By 1942 the legal status of the CPC was very much a matter of public debate.<sup>108</sup> Still banned, the communists reorganized as the "Tim Buck Plebiscite Committees" to mobilize yes-votes in the 1942 referendum on conscription. The Tim Buck Committees were then changed into Communist-Labor Total War Committees which served as a semi-legal resurrection of the CPC.<sup>109</sup> The Communist-Labor committees campaigned for "all-out" industrial production and no-strike pledges, in return for a *quid pro quo* from the government. The communists demanded that the government revise its labour policies, by enacting legislation on compulsory collective bargaining and the right to organize unions.<sup>110</sup>

The CPC also urged its members to join the armed forces in the most public manner possible. Bill Stewart was a YCL member in Montreal, and a machinist at Fairchild Aircraft prior to joining the army in January 1942. Stewart vividly recalled the circumstances of his enlistment. The Communist-Labor Total War Committee, organized a mass meeting in Montreal, attended by 2,000 to 3,000 people. Stewart remembered that "thirty-nine members of the Communist Party stood up and announced their intention to join the army, and there was a representative of the armed forces at the meeting who took our applications."<sup>111</sup>

Such public campaigning by the communists, and the wartime alliance with the USSR, contributed to a shift in public opinion towards the CPC. Gallup polls in September 1942 showed that public opinion was closely divided over whether

to intern Tim Buck and other leaders of the CPC who emerged from hiding: 44 per cent favoured internment, 39 per cent opposed internment, and 17 per cent were undecided. Pro-internment opinion, however, was concentrated in Quebec, where 80 per cent favoured detention. Anti-internment sentiment was strongest in Ontario at 62 per cent, while 57 per cent of all non-Quebeckers felt that the communist leaders should remain free. On the other hand, 62 per cent of all Canadians, including Quebeckers, felt that the CPC should not be legalized.<sup>112</sup>

In any event, the government began releasing party internees quietly in January 1942, "one-by-one, two or three weeks apart," so that all were freed by the autumn.<sup>113</sup> In the meantime, under pressure from opposition parties, the government struck a committee to study the DOCR. The committee recommended lifting the ban on the CPC. The cabinet, however, rejected the idea. The RCMP and the Justice Department insisted that the actual communist aim was "victory for the Soviet Union over democracy," and to "subvert the Canadian Armed Forces to that end."<sup>114</sup>

Characteristically, King added pragmatic political concerns to the refusal to legalize the CPC. With an eye to the Liberal base in Quebec, King intended to placate his Quebec power brokers who in no uncertain terms opposed legalizing the CPC. In July 1942, King told his cabinet colleagues that lifting the ban on the CPC would "give rise to bitter religious strife both in the House and in the province [Quebec]." King argued that "our Quebec friends have been through a difficult place. To expect the government to remove a ban on Communism would be almost too much for them."<sup>115</sup> The issue did not disappear, however, and in January 1943, King was compelled to reassure the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Cardinal Villeneuve of Quebec that his government made a clear distinction between sympathy for the Russian people during the war, and "the activities of Canadian Communists." The government, wrote King, would continue to "deal firmly with all subversive activities tending to discord and disunity."<sup>116</sup>

At the same time, King needed to satisfy those vocal critics who continued to criticize the ban on the CPC.<sup>117</sup> By the spring

of 1943, the government found a way around its dilemma. After the Comintern was disbanded in June 1943, the CCF asked Justice Minister Louis St. Laurent whether the ban on the CPC would be lifted. Responding in the House of Commons, St. Laurent reiterated the government's refusal. St. Laurent, however, left a door open to the communists by adding that if "any other party or group should be made up [of] men who formerly belonged to this organization," the response of the government "would depend upon the attitude [the communists] adopted."<sup>118</sup> In fact, the communists were already busy organizing themselves into the LPP, which was founded in August 1943.<sup>119</sup>

### Communists and the Armed Forces

As noted, the RCMP's wartime responsibilities included vetting security clearances of armed forces personnel. The RCMP had opposed lifting the ban on the CPC, fearing that the communists planned to infiltrate and subvert the Canadian military. Military officials in all three branches of the armed forces shared the RCMP's fears. Although the government reluctantly restored the communists to partial legality in 1943, the RCMP and the military were determined to keep communists in the armed forces under surveillance.<sup>120</sup>

This was an enormous job. There are no firm figures available, but a reasonable guess is that several hundred communists joined the armed forces in the Second World War.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps most of these enlistees were not known to military recruiters or the RCMP as communists. Even those enlistees who were known communists, like Bill Walsh, often ended up in places and circumstances beyond the immediate reach of the Mounties. Although the identification and surveillance of suspected subversives was intense, resources were strained by the demands of security screening for a military force that expanded from less than 10,000 personnel in 1939 to more than one million by 1945.<sup>122</sup> As a result, security checks and controls could be haphazard and inconsistent.

Throughout the war, the RCMP and the military high command cooperated closely in the effort to control and monitor suspected and known communists. The primary vehicle used for surveillance was a system of mass-fingerprinting, organized separately by each branch of the armed forces. By the end of the war, fingerprints had been obtained from nearly all recruits.<sup>123</sup> Normally, the armed forces sent fingerprint records to the RCMP for vetting only in cases where enlistees were suspected or known "subversives."<sup>124</sup> Actual investigations were conducted within the armed forces, but the volume could be very heavy. According to Larry Hannant, the army's Military Intelligence Section 3 (MI3) carried out "500 in-depth field checks per month" by January 1945.<sup>125</sup>

Where possible, military recruiters were required to act as gate-keepers, so that possible subversives were screened before they entered the armed forces. Security screening at this level was the most haphazard, and the greatest number of checks were made on personnel who were already enlisted. In the army, known communists and confirmed subversives were placed on a "Red list" and the code-word "non-sensitive" was attached to their personnel files.<sup>126</sup> Among other things, the code indicated that a particular soldier was not to be promoted or shipped overseas until his case had been thoroughly reviewed.<sup>127</sup> In several cases, enlistments were refused and recruits discharged when MI3 determined that the individuals under investigation were too dangerous.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of security screening in the armed forces should not be over-estimated. As personnel policies travelled down the chain of command, those pertaining to "non-sensitive" personnel were often applied rather unevenly. Some well-known communists were promoted to the rank of captain or major. Many communists were prevented temporarily from serving overseas, in a few cases permanently.<sup>129</sup> On the other hand, a large number of communists fought with distinction, including Dick Steele, who was killed in the Falaise Gap.<sup>130</sup>

To a certain extent the limits on security screening can be attributed to the "noise and distortions" that tend to

affect the functioning of any command structure, as well as to the necessity of allowing commanding officers to apply policy according to their discretion and within reasonable limits. Control efforts, however, were also limited by the logic of the war itself. By the time that communists began joining the armed forces, it was abundantly clear that Canada was in a war to the finish. The armed forces needed highly motivated and disciplined soldiers, and regardless of all else, communists often fit the bill.<sup>131</sup>

Perhaps the most forthright expression of this logic was the secret recruitment, in 1942, of more than 60 Canadian communists by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Mainly of Yugoslav, Hungarian and Bulgarian descent, these communists were parachuted behind enemy lines into Yugoslavia and the Balkans, with assignments to link up with resistance forces, gather intelligence, carry out sabotage, and attack enemy forces.<sup>132</sup>

The precise means of recruiting Canadian communists for these missions remains obscure. SOE recruitment in 1942 for the Yugoslav missions appears to have involved cooperation between the British Security Coordination (BSC), the RCMP, the departments of National Defense and External Affairs in Canada, and of course, the illegal CPC. According to Roy MacLaren, the RCMP contacted the CPC with a request for recruits. Steve Serdar, a Yugoslav-Canadian who was a party organizer in Val D'Or, Quebec, claimed that enough communists volunteered to form a brigade. Serdar and fifteen others were selected in August 1942, and trained in Canada, Palestine, and Egypt. They were then dropped into Yugoslavia at intervals after the spring of 1943.<sup>133</sup>

SOE recruitment of Canadian communists of Hungarian and Bulgarian descent followed a similar pattern, although contact with the CPC was made through the Department of National Defense. About eight Hungarian-Canadians and an unknown number of Bulgarian-Canadians were chosen. Some were already in the armed forces: Steve Markos was with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, while Steve Mate was training with the Canadian

Armoured Corps School at Camp Borden. The others were subsequently enlisted and trained.<sup>134</sup>

The OSS apparently adopted an even more straightforward approach. The OSS worked with Canadian authorities and the SOE, but it contacted the CPC directly in 1942. According to Tim Buck, OSS chief Colonel Donovan met with *Canadian Tribune* editor A.A. Macleod to request 15 to 20 CPC volunteers willing to drop behind enemy lines in the Balkans. According to Buck, the party secured 20 volunteers: twelve Yugoslavs (mainly Croatians), one Slovenian, one Montenegrin, two Serbians, two Bulgarians, and two Macedonians.<sup>135</sup>

Most communist volunteers, however, joined the regular services of the armed forces. Yet even in the regular military, security-control policies were often applied arbitrarily, rather than systematically, which produced mixed results. This may best be seen through the experiences of communist enlistees themselves, in their enlistment, training, promotion, and assignment, as well as in the nature and extent of their activities as communists within the armed forces.

First, there were inconsistencies in processing the enlistment applications of known communists. In February 1942, the Communist-Labor Total War Committee sent Ray Stevenson from Kirkland Lake, Ontario, to Val D'Or to replace Steve Serdar (who had been recruited by the SOE). Not long afterwards Stevenson joined the army. Although Stevenson was a well-known communist, his enlistment application at Val D'Or was processed immediately.<sup>136</sup> William Stewart had the same experience.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, several former-internees signed up with no trouble.<sup>138</sup> On the other hand, Ben Swankey, who had been interned at Kananaskis, Petawawa and Hull, tried to enlist in December 1942 at Edmonton, but was told that his application would have to be cleared by the RCMP. A month later, in January 1943, Swankey was notified that his application had been approved, and he was sent to Grande Prairie, Alberta, for basic training.<sup>139</sup> Former internee, John McNeil, had worse luck when he applied

for the navy in 1942 in Winnipeg. The navy curtly rejected McNeil as an undesirable recruit.<sup>140</sup>

Commanding officers were informed when known communists were placed in their units, but this knowledge could have differing results. William Stewart ended up in Britain as a corporal with the Elgin Regiment of the Canadian Armoured Corps, attached to the First Canadian Army Corps. According to Stewart, his CO announced that he intended to drive Stewart out of the army. Stewart retorted that the colonel was not “man enough to do it,” and ended up having to endure one form or another of penalty duty. Later, in northwest Africa in 1943, Stewart fell into another confrontation, with the result that he “carried buckets of officer shit across the desert in 120 degree temperatures for a month-and-a-half” until his unit was sent to Italy.<sup>141</sup>

Ben Swankey and Ray Stevenson had different experiences. Stevenson was picked out at Camp Borden during training with the Canadian Armoured Corps, and put on a potential officer list with several other communists. As Stevenson recalled, however, “there was a long delay in sending us through [officer training] while HQ was making up its mind what to do with some of us.” Stevenson became a training officer, and was assigned to design a curriculum, including a course on the nature of fascism, for soldiers about to be sent overseas. Although Stevenson’s commanding officer warned him against “selling the Party line,” Stevenson had a fairly free hand, and was allowed to select Sam Walsh, another communist, as an aide. Eventually Stevenson was promoted to the rank of captain and was, at one point, invited by General Worthington to lecture the Provost Corps on industrial relations.<sup>142</sup>

Swankey enlisted with the Royal Canadian Artillery Corps and when he arrived at Shilo, Manitoba, he was summoned for an interview with his commanding officer. The CO was a Ukrainian-Canadian who expressed sympathy for Swankey’s experience in internment. Swankey’s superior was required to file weekly reports on “non-sensitive” personnel with M3. The CO delegated that task to another communist in the unit

and Swankey recalled that, “we used to draw them up together, so I had some very good reports.”<sup>143</sup>

Swankey never saw his personnel file, but he claimed that it contained a stipulation that he was not to be promoted. Despite this, Swankey was trained as an instructor and promoted to the rank of sergeant within three months. He was then assigned to lecture on topics that included an analysis of the Italian army. Swankey, however, lost his rank when he was posted overseas in March 1945, and he arrived in Britain as a private in the Artillery Corps.<sup>144</sup>

While the army sent Swankey and Stewart overseas, it would not post Ray Stevenson in a military theatre of operation, despite his repeated requests. Stevenson claimed to have learned through “a clandestine source in army intelligence,” that he “would not be shipped overseas for political reasons.”<sup>145</sup> According to Swankey, commanding officers were “under orders not to trust” communists.<sup>146</sup> The application of such orders, however, depended on the inclination of particular officers. William Stewart noted that the army had “an organized approach to the question of communists,” but that anti-communist attitudes receded after 1942, except among officers who were “ideologically way to the right” and who insisted on “fighting anti-communist battles.”<sup>147</sup> According to Swankey, commanding officers often discovered that communists “were eager, dedicated, and ... very good soldiers.”<sup>148</sup>

It does seem that some commanding officers appreciated the role that communists could play as morale boosters. During the Italian campaign, Stewart organized educational activities in his unit, including discussions about the Red Army’s progress on the eastern front.<sup>149</sup> In a more concrete estimate of the communist contribution to morale-building, the Canadian Armoured Corps conducted a survey to assess Ray Stevenson’s success in preparing soldiers about to proceed on draft overseas. The survey indicated that, in before-and-after sampling, the number of soldiers who felt prepared to go overseas rose from 59 per cent to 75 per cent, while the number who felt it was their duty to go overseas rose from 83 per cent to 94 per cent.<sup>150</sup>

In any event, the communist role in the armed forces was far from what the RCMP feared. The RCMP seems to have constantly read the most diabolical intentions into the most innocuous activity. For example, in February 1943 the RCMP reported that a committee of trade unionists and soldiers in New Westminster, British Columbia, was controlled by the CPC as a vehicle to recruit members and to "render the troops more susceptible to the party approach." Among other things, this committee planned to organize "entertainment for the troops" and to demand "free or reduced fares [for soldiers] while travelling and an upward revision of pay and pensions."<sup>151</sup>

Contrary to RCMP impressions, from 1942-45 the CPC produced almost no propaganda aimed directly at armed services personnel. Most of its materials were intended for broader public consumption and from a communist perspective strove to improve the war effort. The YCL protested "the over-crowding of Canadian fliers on overseas transport" and issued a pamphlet entitled, "Everything for the Fighting Front!" The YCL also promoted the less-than-seditious demand that the government "increase army pay and dependent allowances" and provide returning soldiers with adequate jobs and pensions.<sup>152</sup> Clearly, communists hoped that such propaganda efforts would redound to their benefit by improving their standing in public opinion. These materials, however, revealed no efforts to inflame revolutionary sentiment.

More importantly, the CPC, and its legal successor the LPP, instructed its members in the armed forces to sever formal ties with the party. Thus, communists in the armed forces paid no membership dues to it, and their names were removed from LPP membership lists. Ray Stevenson, William Stewart, and Ben Swankey insist that no party organization existed in the armed forces, and that they never received instructions from the party.<sup>153</sup> Communists in the armed forces did not abandon their political ideas. Nonetheless, they were careful not to violate the letter of the King's Rules and Regulations for Canada and the Army Manual of Law. As Ray Stevenson noted, this

protected communists from being “open to a charge of taking orders from an outside source.”<sup>154</sup>

Yet communists in the armed forces found other ways of staying politically active. Corporal Les Hunt, one of many communists who disagreed with the Party’s anti-war stand, joined the army in 1940 and was shipped almost immediately to England. Just after D-Day in 1944, Hunt ended up in Normandy and served for eleven months with a Royal Canadian Signal Corps reconnaissance unit. In 1942, while stationed in England, Hunt helped organize an international youth conference which convened in November. The conference demanded the opening of a second front to relieve the pressure on the Red Army. The conference attracted young Britons and anti-fascist exiles from Europe. Also attending were some Canadian armed forces personnel, including Corporal William Stewart and 21 other communists. Most interesting about the conference, is that the Canadian military tolerated the participation of their personnel.<sup>155</sup>

While communists in the armed forces did not form party cells, they did organize as anti-fascists. Apparently this satisfied most commanding officers. Based on British Army practise, military regulations allowed for the creation of current affairs clubs within units. Communists used this as the means to conduct anti-fascist education among military personnel. Les Hunt was one of the first to organize such a club. He recalled that his superiors were initially unsure of “how to cope with communists as loyal patriots.” In October 1941, Hunt was hauled before his CO to explain his conduct. Hunt successfully defended his legal right to organize a current affairs club, and he was permitted to continue with anti-fascist educational work. As other Canadian communists arrived in Britain, Hunt urged them to organize current affairs clubs in their units. This was the origin of the education meetings organized in William Stewart’s unit in Italy.<sup>156</sup>

Communists in the military, however, began re-establishing ties with the LPP by the end of the war. In 1945, the armed forces decided to allow its personnel to run as candidates in

forthcoming Canadian elections. Armed forces candidates were granted leave and flown to Canada by the Royal Canadian Air Force. Military personnel were nominated as candidates in the June federal and Ontario elections by the Liberals, the Conservatives, the CCF, and the LPP. Ray Stevenson was one of three armed forces personnel running for the LPP in the Ontario election, and Ben Swankey was one of the LPP's nine military candidates in the federal election.<sup>157</sup>

The election campaigns, while moderately encouraging for the LPP, should have put to rest RCMP fears about the extent of communist influence in the armed forces. Federally, the LPP collected 110,000, or two per cent of all votes. The LPP, however, ran close races in some ridings and elected Fred Rose in Montreal Cartier (Rose was later deprived of his seat, convicted of conspiracy under the Official Secrets Act). The LPP received about 5,000 soldiers' votes, or 1.4 per cent of all armed forces ballots. In Ontario, the party elected two MPPs from Toronto, Joe Salsberg and A.A. Macleod. The LPP won 71,000 votes (four per cent), and about 4,000 soldiers' votes. Only Salsberg won a plurality of soldiers' votes for the LPP.<sup>158</sup>

### Conclusion

Corporal William Stewart was serving as a wireless operator in a Sherman Tank with the Ontario Regiment during the Allied advance on Florence, Italy, in June 1944. Stewart's tank was hit during a German rearguard action, and he was badly burned. Evacuated to England and then back to Canada, Stewart received his military discharge in 1945. The RCMP picked up Stewart's trail again in May, noting that the veteran had contributed to an LPP leaflet which urged government measures to provide "rehabilitation and jobs for returning veterans."<sup>159</sup>

The Second World War was ending and the Cold War was about to begin. As communist veterans like Stewart

returned to civilian life, they left the purview of military authorities charged with maintaining internal security in the armed forces. The activities of civilian communists, however, were to remain an intense focus of RCMP scrutiny and surveillance. Throughout the Second World War the RCMP had been the main vehicle, and a primary exponent, of an entrenched anti-communist government policy. The RCMP entered the war years armed with expanded powers and responsibility under the DOCR, which it had helped develop. The RCMP had a prior disposition to regard communists as a greater threat to internal security than nazis and fascists, and it urged the government to take tougher measures against the CPC.

The government was no less worried about the threat of communist subversion. King, however, balanced his anti-communism with a more finely-tuned sense of political opportunism. When a lower court decision made it convenient, King agreed to ban the CPC. When the communists switched to a pro-war policy, and public opinion mounted in favour of legalizing the CPC, King manoeuvred to satisfy liberals as well as die-hard anti-communists. Although the ban on the CPC remained in force, communists were tolerated but closely monitored in a no-man's land of quasi-legality.

The communists had been extremely short-sighted and very ill-advised to adopt an anti-war policy in 1939. The CPC's decision undermined its own anti-fascist orientation and encouraged anti-communists in the government to impose repressive measures against the party. Contrary to the justifications offered by the RCMP and the government, the decision to suppress the CPC was based more on ideological motivations than on a demonstrated threat to the internal security of Canada. The CPC openly expressed pro-Soviet loyalties, but Canada was never at war with the USSR. Nor should later events, such as the feeble advocacy of revolutionary defeatism by one faction in the CPC during 1940-41 or Fred Rose's postwar conviction, obscure the fact that the CPC publicly pushed a policy of neutrality and withdrawal from the war.

That the repression of communists was ideologically motivated is underscored by the fact that Canada was the only allied partner to impose such a proscription throughout the war.<sup>160</sup> Despite the party's convoluted logic and twists in policy during 1939-41, Canadian communists never denied the need for a genuine anti-fascist war. Nor is there evidence that the CPC supported the fascist enemy, or organized acts of sabotage. Nevertheless, the Canadian government, the RCMP, and the military continued to perceive a subversive threat even when communists embraced the war in 1941.

The RCMP and military intelligence made determined efforts to weed out or control the activities of communists who joined the armed forces after 1941. The logic of the war, however, also produced friction between official anti-communism and the exigencies of prosecuting the war. Despite "Red-lists" and security checks, communists joined the armed forces and often served with distinction. Communists in the armed forces cut their official ties with the party and carefully presented themselves as anti-fascist patriots. In units where communists served, commanding officers often concluded that, anti-communist fears aside, it was better to make good use of communists and worry about politics later.

<sup>1</sup> Larry Hannant, *The Infernal Machine: Investigating the Loyalty of Canada's Citizens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 128-129.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Walsh, in *Dangerous Patriots*, eds. William and Kathleen Repka (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1982), 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 196-210.

<sup>4</sup> Reg Whitaker, "Official Repression of Communism During World War II," *Labour/Le Travail* 17 (Spring 1986): 145-146.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-152.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 164-165; see also, Tim Buck, *Canada Needs a Party of Communists!* (Toronto: National Initiative Committee to Convene a Communist Constituent Convention, 1943), and Young Communist League [YCL], *Everything for the Fighting Front!* (Toronto: YCL, ca. 1941-1942).

<sup>7</sup> Hannant, *The Infernal Machine*, 119-138.

<sup>8</sup> Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Freedom in Wartime," in *His Own Man: Essays in Honour of Arthur Reginald Marsden Lower*, ed. W.H.

Heick and Roger Graham (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 38.

<sup>9</sup>Norman Hillmer, Bohdan Kordan, Lubomyr Luciuket, eds., *On Guard For Thee: War, Ethnicity, and the Canadian State, 1939-1945* (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1988).

<sup>10</sup>Gregory Kealey and Reg Whitaker, eds., *RCMP Security Bulletins: The War Series, 1939-1941* (St. John's: Canadian Committee on Labour History, 1989), 295-296; see also, Reg Whitaker, "Official Repression," 136-137.

<sup>11</sup>Ramsay Cook, "Canadian Freedom in Wartime," 37-38.

<sup>12</sup>Ramsay Cook, *Canadian Liberalism in Wartime: A Study of the Defense of Canada Regulations* (M.A. diss., Queen's University, 1955), 51-66; Whitaker, "Official Repression," 17, 50.

<sup>13</sup>S.T. Wood, "Tools of Treachery," *RCMP Quarterly* 8 (4) (April 1941): 394-395.

<sup>14</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 222-224.

<sup>15</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 146.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 136-137.

<sup>17</sup>Whitaker, "Introduction," in *Bulletins*, 11.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 10-11; Whitaker, "Official Repression," 136-137.

<sup>19</sup>S.T. Wood, "Tools of Treachery," 395. In 1935, Wood commanded the RCMP force in Regina that violently suppressed jobless workers on the On-To-Ottawa Trek. According to Lorne and Caroline Brown, Wood's role in this event helped facilitate his rise in the RCMP; see, Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1978), 77-78.

<sup>20</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 22.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 69, 81-82.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>23</sup>Jack Pickersgill, quoted in Whitaker, "Introduction," 10-14.

<sup>24</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 137; Hannant, *Infernal Machine*, 90.

<sup>25</sup>William Lyon Mackenzie King, *The Mackenzie King Diaries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980, text-fiche:), 21 Aug. 1939 and 24 Aug. 1939.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 5 May 1941.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 6 Sept. 1939, 8 May 1941, and 18 and 19 Jan. 1943.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, 16 Nov. 1939.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 24 Nov. 1939.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*; Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 227.

<sup>32</sup>King, *Diaries*, 24 Nov. 1939.

<sup>33</sup>S.W. Horrall, "Canada's Security Service: A Brief History," *RCMP Quarterly* 50(3) (Summer 1985): 46.

<sup>34</sup>Whitaker, "Introduction," 11.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 11-12; C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, volume 1, *Six Years of War* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955), 149-150; S.W. Horrall, "Canada's Security Service," 46.

<sup>36</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 164-165; Whitaker, "Official Repression," 145.

<sup>37</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 145.

<sup>38</sup>Norman Penner, *Canadian Communism: The Stalin Years and Beyond* (Toronto: Methuen, 1988), 166; Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), 142.

<sup>39</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 145.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 47-48 and 78-81; Ben Swankey, interview by author, 11 November 1995, Calgary, Alberta.

<sup>42</sup>Various sources mention the arrest and detention of about 250 actual and alleged CPC members. It is assumed that this figure includes not only the internees, but also those who were arrested and detained for short periods of time; see, Communist Party of Canada [CPC], *Canada's Party of Socialism* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1982), 137; and, Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 9.

<sup>43</sup>Tim Buck, *Yours in the Struggle* (Toronto: NC Press, 1977), 290-299.

<sup>44</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 140.

<sup>45</sup>*The Clarion*, 26 Sept. 1939.

<sup>46</sup>Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 164-165.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 161-162.

<sup>48</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 288-289; see also Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 49-50.

<sup>49</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 140.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>CPC, *Canada's Party of Socialism*, 124-131.

<sup>52</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 138.

<sup>53</sup>King, *Diaries*, 1 July 1939, 21 July 1939, 25 July 1939, 20 Aug. 1939, 21 Aug. 1939, 22 Aug. 1939, 24 Aug. 1939, 3 Sept. 1939, and 6 Sept. 1939.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., 21-24 Aug. 1939.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 21 Aug. 1939.

<sup>56</sup>J.L. Granatstein, *Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 420.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 424.

<sup>58</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 59-60.

<sup>59</sup>Avakumovic, *Communist Party*, 115; Buck, *Struggle*, 285.

<sup>60</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 290.

<sup>61</sup>Ray Stevenson, interview by author, 18 Oct. 1995, Calgary, Alberta.

- <sup>62</sup>William Stewart, interview by author, 24 Oct. 1995, Calgary, Alberta; Buck, *Struggle*, 290.
- <sup>63</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 185-186 and 116.
- <sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 110-111.
- <sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 332-333.
- <sup>66</sup>Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 166.
- <sup>67</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 294-298.
- <sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*; Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 315 and 323-324; CPC, *Party of Socialism*, 138; Penner, *Canadian Communists*, 166-168.
- <sup>69</sup>This can be established by examining and comparing materials published by various cells and bodies of the CPC; see Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 332-335, 344-352.
- <sup>70</sup>Wood, "Tools of Treachery," 395.
- <sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 395-397.
- <sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 396.
- <sup>73</sup>Stacey, *Official History*, 296.
- <sup>74</sup>Desmond Morton, *Canada and War* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1981), 115 and 123.
- <sup>75</sup>Irving Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Cook, *Liberalism in Wartime*, 174-175.
- <sup>76</sup>Morton, *Canada and War*, 123; Bryan Palmer, *Working Class Experience* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 279.
- <sup>77</sup>Jeremy Webber, "The Malaise of Compulsory Conciliation: Strike Prevention in Canada During World War II," *Labour/Le Travail* 15 (Spring 1985): 63-69; Palmer, *Working Class Experience*, 278-279.
- <sup>78</sup>Quoted in Cook, *Canadian Liberalism*, 178-179.
- <sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*; Jim Green, *Against the Tide* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1986), 88; Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 126-127.
- <sup>80</sup>Cook, *Canadian Liberalism*, 175-194.
- <sup>81</sup>Cabinet War Committee of Canada, *Minutes and Documents of the Cabinet War Committee*, "CMA Brief," 5 May 1941; Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour*, 73.
- <sup>82</sup>King, *Diaries*, 30 May 1941.
- <sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 5 May 1941, 18 May 1941, and 30 May 1941.
- <sup>84</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 362-363.
- <sup>85</sup>Bill Stewart and Ray Stevenson, interviews.
- <sup>86</sup>Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour*, 66-85.
- <sup>87</sup>Walsh, quoted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 196-198.
- <sup>88</sup>Green, *Against the Tide*, 74-84.
- <sup>89</sup>Charles Murray, quoted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 127-129.
- <sup>90</sup>Cabinet War Committee of Canada, Minutes of 2 October 1941; Jackson, quoted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 144-146.
- <sup>91</sup>Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 173-174.

<sup>92</sup>King, *Diaries*, 23 May 1940.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., 20 June 1940.

<sup>94</sup>Penner, *Canadian Communism*, 173-175; Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 272-273, 289, 332-334, 336, 372, 374, 397-398, 412-413.

<sup>95</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 333-334.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 332-335.

<sup>97</sup>King, *Diaries*, 18 May 1941.

<sup>98</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 298-299.

<sup>99</sup>King, *Diaries*, 22 June 1941.

<sup>100</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 411.

<sup>101</sup>Swankey, interview.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>"An Open Letter to Prime Minister King," reprinted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 247-249.

<sup>104</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 148-149; Whitaker, "Introduction," 17.

<sup>105</sup>Cook, "Canadian Freedom in Wartime," 48-51.

<sup>106</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 305-307.

<sup>107</sup>*War Cabinet Committee of Canada*, Minutes of 2 Oct. and 29 Oct. 1941, and Correspondence from the U.S. State Department, 28 Oct. 1941.

<sup>108</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 150.

<sup>109</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 300-301.

<sup>110</sup>Tim Buck, *Canada in the Coming Offensive* (Toronto: Communist-Labor Total War Committee, 1943), 15-22; Tim Buck, *A Labor Policy for Victory* (Toronto: Communist-Labor Total War Committee, 1943), 2-3, 42-49; *The Canadian Tribune, The Case for Labor* (Toronto: Canadian Tribune, 1943).

<sup>111</sup>Stewart, interview.

<sup>112</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 27-28.

<sup>113</sup>Peter Prokop, quoted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 241.

<sup>114</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 151.

<sup>115</sup>King, *Diaries*, 25 July 1942.

<sup>116</sup>*War Cabinet Committee of Canada*, Minutes of 21 Jan. 1943, and Draft Letter From Prime Minister to Cardinal Villeneuve, 20 Jan. 1943.

<sup>117</sup>Whitaker, "Introduction," 17.

<sup>118</sup>Louis St. Laurent, quoted in Buck, *Canada Needs a Party*, 29.

<sup>119</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 320-324.

<sup>120</sup>Hannant, *Infernal Machine*, 119-131.

<sup>121</sup>Larry Hannant quotes an estimate of 100 communists in the armed forces as early as February 1941 in *Infernal Machine*, 122.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., 120-121.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 125, 129-130.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., 126.

- <sup>125</sup>Ibid., 127.
- <sup>126</sup>Stevenson, Stewart, and Swankey, interviews.
- <sup>127</sup>Hunt and Stevenson, interviews; Hannant, *Infernal Machine*, 127.
- <sup>128</sup>Hannant, *Infernal Machine*, 127.
- <sup>129</sup>Ibid.; Binder quoted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 142.
- <sup>130</sup>Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour*, 59.
- <sup>131</sup>Swankey, Stewart, and Stevenson, interviews. In addition, there was considerable friction at time between the intelligence sections of the RCMP and the Armed Forces, see Whitaker, "Introduction."
- <sup>132</sup>CPC, *Canada's Party*, 145; Roy Maclaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines, 1939-1945* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1981), 3-8.
- <sup>133</sup>Maclaren, *Canadians Behind Enemy Lines*, 135-150.
- <sup>134</sup>Ibid., 155-171.
- <sup>135</sup>Buck, *Struggle*, 302-304.
- <sup>136</sup>Stevenson, interview.
- <sup>137</sup>Stewart, interview; see note 111.
- <sup>138</sup>Mitch Sago quoted in Repka and Repka, *Dangerous Patriots*, 195.
- <sup>139</sup>Swankey, interview.
- <sup>140</sup>Hannant, *Infernal Machine*, 119-120.
- <sup>141</sup>Stewart, interview.
- <sup>142</sup>Stevenson, interview.
- <sup>143</sup>Swankey, interview.
- <sup>144</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>145</sup>Stevenson, interview.
- <sup>146</sup>Swankey, interview.
- <sup>147</sup>Stewart, interview.
- <sup>148</sup>Swankey, interview.
- <sup>149</sup>Stewart, interview.
- <sup>150</sup>Stevenson, interview.
- <sup>151</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 45.
- <sup>152</sup>YCL, *Everything for the Fighting Front!*.
- <sup>153</sup>Stevenson, Stewart, and Swankey, interviews.
- <sup>154</sup>Stevenson, interview.
- <sup>155</sup>Hunt and Stewart, interviews.
- <sup>156</sup>Hunt, interview.
- <sup>157</sup>Stevenson and Swankey, interviews.
- <sup>158</sup>Kealey and Whitaker, *Bulletins*, 337-350.
- <sup>159</sup>Ibid., 352; Stewart, interview.
- <sup>160</sup>Whitaker, "Official Repression," 151-152.