

BOOK REVIEWS

Sean M. Maloney, "Canada and UN Peacekeeping—Cold War by Other Means, 1945-1970"

(St. Catharines: Vanwell Publishing Limited, 2002)

Reviewed by Mark Gaillard

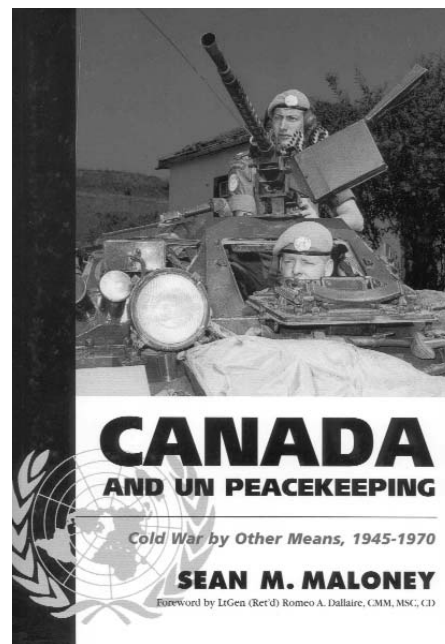
Sean Maloney's latest book, *Canada and UN Peacekeeping—Cold War by Other Means, 1945-1970*, approaches the military history of UN peacekeeping, and Canada's record in "blue-helmet" operations from the angle of the strategic, diplomatic and military contexts of the Cold War confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact led by the USSR. It also attempts to deconstruct the Canadian national peacekeeping myth. This myth, which Maloney sees as being detrimental, then and now, to Canada's national security interests, is apparently perpetuated by my own Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), which according to Maloney, "continuously boasts that [Canada] is the world's foremost peacekeeper." Maloney claims that "Canadian policy circles" (presumably including those inhabiting DFAIT) became infatuated with the "new" peacekeeping, human security and "soft power" in the post-Cold War 1990s, and have reinforced the myth and "obscured the true political origins and diplomatic purposes underlying Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping operations."

The question of whether the "true political origins and diplomatic purposes" have been obscured ignited a tempest in a teapot at DFAIT this past summer. Each morning as I pass through the main lobby of the Lester B. Pearson Building on the way to my office, I cast a quick glance at a small display case. Beneath a small bronze statuette of Lester B. Pearson sitting in a chair, one can view both the scroll and the actual medal of the Nobel Peace Prize that then Minister

of External Affairs Pearson won in 1957. Like thousands of foreign service officers before me, I have walked past these artifacts of the history of the Department of External Affairs (since 1993 the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade) without questioning the prevailing myth that Pearson and Canada won the award for the invention of United Nations peacekeeping.

The publication of Sean Maloney's book, coupled with the reaction in the media this past summer has caused me to take a second look at that display. The 11 July 2002 edition of the *National Post* carried an article by Chris Wattie with the headline "General, not Pearson, Created Peacekeeping, New Book Says." This article stated that a "new book by a Canadian military historian says Lester B. Pearson did not invent peacekeeping during the 1956 Suez Crisis, the international standoff that he won the Nobel Peace Prize for helping defuse . . . Sean Maloney argues that Lieutenant-General E. L. M. Burns, a Canadian Army officer seconded to the UN, actually did the bulk of the work in creating the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in 1956."

In the 16 August 2002 edition of the *Toronto Sun* in an article titled "Off Target," Peter Worthington stated that Maloney's *Cold War by Other Means* "has been interpreted by some as saying Pearson...was not the one mainly responsible for the 'invention' of peacekeeping" because "that distinction" goes to Burns. Worthington goes on to say that



"though I have not read the book, I doubt Dr. Maloney makes such a categorical claim."

I have made a point of reading the book to see what this so-called controversy actually is all about. In doing so, I have had the pleasure of reading a well-written military history of Canada's part in the golden age of UN peacekeeping. The subtitle, which plays on Clausewitz's famous maxim in his 1832 masterwork, *Vom Kriege*, that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means,"¹ succinctly sets out the central theme: Canadian participation in UN peacekeeping in the 1950s and 1960s can only be understood in the context of Canada's NATO policy during the same period. The essence of Maloney's argument is that "Canadian peacekeeping operations were a means to project Canadian power for national security interests, interests which included economic, military and diplomatic components,

and that this power projection was in most cases directly related to, and even subordinated to, Canada's NATO policy." Fair enough. To me, this is the true controversy. The book should not be some revisionist attempt to strip the politician and diplomat Pearson of the credit of "inventing" peacekeeping and to confer it on a more-deserving but overlooked military officer.

The Pearson-versus-Burns issue arises only in the context of Maloney's description of the events of the Suez Crisis and the creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in November 1956. General Burns, a Canadian Army officer with a highly distinguished combat record in two World Wars, was appointed in 1954 as Chief of Staff of the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), formed following the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. In 1955, the British were increasingly concerned about the threat to the security of the Suez Canal Zone from the improving ties between the USSR and the Nasser regime in Egypt. Meeting with British Foreign Secretary Anthony Nutting in London on 4 November 1955, Burns discussed with Nutting "the possibility of introducing United Nations troops between the armed forces" of the countries involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Burns's suggestion appears to have had no impact on British military action in Egypt, as events were to quickly confirm. In Burns's words, the conclusion of this meeting was that "nothing more than the proposals of the [UN] Secretary General could be advanced at that time."

The 4 November 1955 meeting between Burns and Nutting appears to be the sole basis for Maloney's claim that Burns is the source of the "concept of interpositional UN peace operations in the Middle East using military forces...as a solution to the troubles in the region." Contradicting this is Maloney's contention that the originator right from the beginning of the Suez Crisis of the idea of an "international force" to be inserted into Egypt was Pearson. The key paragraph here, whose source is Cabinet records, deserves to be quoted in full:

Early on November 1 [1956], Canadian Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent sent a message to Anthony Eden, the British Prime Minister. St. Laurent emphasized that the Anglo-French action was not justified and that there was the strongest possibility of war, regional or worldwide, if the action continued. This action, St. Laurent noted, would split the Commonwealth and—more importantly—NATO. The Soviets would also exploit this and destroy everything the West had accomplished since 1948. St. Laurent urged Eden to find some way of stopping the operation. There was no reply to his communication. St. Laurent then conferred with Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester Pearson. Pearson suggested that some form of legitimate international force could be used to replace the Anglo-French force waiting offshore, thus allowing the British and the French to withdraw from their publically [sic] stated position that they were a "peace force". This was urgent, Pearson emphasized. The West could not afford wholesale condemnation of the UK and France by the UN General Assembly. This would also be exploited by the Soviets for the purposes of propping up their prestige and influence in the Third World.

The next day in New York, Pearson "approached UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld with the suggestion of replacing the Anglo-French intervention force with an international one." Pearson "wanted to create a temporary force made up of Canadian and American troops, with a token number of French and British troops, to stabilize the situation...[and] this force would be followed by a more diverse international force." At the time, Hammarskjöld thought the idea impractical. Pearson's proposal was conveyed the same day to US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles by the Canadian Ambassador to the US, A. D. P. Heeney, in Washington. Dulles was also searching for ways to prevent the crisis from spreading. In his dialogue with Ambassador Heeney, Dulles agreed that an international force was a potential way forward but that he was unsure how such a "police force" could be constituted. It was Heeney, obviously with instructions from Pearson, who thought that UNTSO could be expanded in some way, with General Burns in command. Crucially, Dulles concurred with this idea. The direct result of this critical meeting

occurred that same day. During the meeting of the UN General Assembly, the US delegation formally asked the Canadian delegation to "formulate and introduce a concrete proposal for an international intervention force." The UNEF was on its way to being born. It would be ultimately left to General Burns to implement the proposal and then command the force itself.

Clearly, the idea to create the UNEF came from the Pearson-Hammarskjöld and Heeney/Dulles meetings of 2 November 1956. It was Pearson who first thought of an international force to defuse the Middle East crisis of November 1956, suggesting it to the Prime Minister and then pursuing this idea to its fruition. Nowhere is there mention that Burns had communicated his 4 November 1955 "suggestion" (if that is what it was) to Nutting, to Pearson or anyone else in the Canadian Government.

This makes it difficult to agree with Maloney's claim that "it is clear that the credit for the creation of UNEF was somewhat misplaced." Maloney implies that Pearson got the credit for Burns's idea. This is unfair and inaccurate. Maloney notes that "Burns implemented a vague idea emanating from New York and produced a workable force on the ground, even though his suggestion for such a force had been rebuffed a year earlier." Rebuffed by whom? Certainly it was not Pearson who rebuffed Burns's suggestion, which was made to the British Foreign Secretary. The idea emanating from New York, however vague, was Pearson's and his alone. Pearson was the decisive factor in the creation of the UNEF, not Burns. The credit has not been mis-placed. We need not, as Maloney contends, "seriously reassess the relative importance of Lester B. Pearson in the development of Canadian UN peacekeeping." Without Pearson's imagination, persuasion and skillful diplomacy, there would have been no UNEF.

Putting aside this minor controversy, Sean Maloney has produced a timely work that challenges the prevailing wisdom that Canada is and has always been

an altruistic peace-keeping nation. Maloney correctly and forcefully argues that, based on the historical record, Canada's participation in UN peacekeeping was purely a function of its policy of maintaining NATO military and political capability to confront and otherwise contain the threat to world peace and security posed by the USSR. UN peacekeeping was one of the ways to fight and ultimately win the Cold War. But, with the demise of the USSR, UN peacekeeping has lost its original purpose. By the 1990s,

however, the myth of peacekeeping had become so ingrained in the Canadian national psyche that the word “peacekeeper” had displaced that of “soldier.” The consequences of this for Canada and the Canadian military are dire.



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ENDNOTE

1. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and tran. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 99.