



Route marches and summer camps, 1950s. Splendid in their bush dress (above left), the Royals step out on a route march at Niagara-on-the-Lake. The men are wearing the scarlet berets that were standard issue in the regiment between 1953 and the early 1970s. In the 1950s and 1960s, the summer camp or concentration was the high point of the regiment's training year. In the photo at right Royals adjust their load-carrying equipment at camp in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The equipment is Second World War vintage but that is acceptable because the tents are First War vintage. The men, however, are wearing the new "bush dress," a comfortable, washable summer field uniform. (RRC Museum)

had commanded the 1st Battalion in 1944, was how to integrate the personnel of the 1st and 2nd Battalions. It was not an easy task as most of the overseas veterans of the 1st Battalion had had enough of soldiering, while the experienced men of the 2nd Battalion were, in most cases, too old to meet the standards handed down by Ottawa. Still worse, it was government policy not to encourage recruiting for the militia and National Defence Headquarters stressed that only "unit cadres of officers, non-commissioned officers, tradesmen and specialists be trained, prior to encouraging any large scale intake of new recruits."³ This decision kept militia unit strengths low – the Royals paraded only 184 all ranks in March 1949 and 233 all ranks in March 1950.

In the late 1940s tension increased between the free and communist world. An abortive Soviet attempt in 1948 to cut off the western garrisons in Berlin led directly to the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to protect Europe against Soviet aggression. In June 1950, a war in all but name broke out in Korea when communist North Korean forces invaded democratic South Korea, initiating a conflict that ultimately involved the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and other nations against North Korea and communist China. These events led to a tremendous increase in the defence budget from \$403 million in 1950 to \$1,907 million by 1953. The regular army tripled in size from three infantry battalions to nine as a brigade was raised for service in Korea and another for deployment to NATO in Germany, while a third was retained in Canada for territorial defence. Traditionally, the regular force had been regarded simply as an instructional cadre for the larger militia force, which would be mobilized and expanded in wartime – as had indeed happened in the two world wars. Now, for the first

time, a larger regular force "in being" was created and the militia took on a secondary role.

The result was that many men who would have joined the militia, including young wartime veterans who did not find civilian life to their liking, instead joined the regular service. Militia strengths fell – the Royals paraded only 155 all ranks in 1951 and the unit was very weak for the next two years.

The regiment on the move, 1953–1958

Things began to improve in 1953 after the Korean conflict ended and militia units found it easier to recruit as the Canadian public became aware of the danger posed by the communist bloc. Unit strengths rose and training intensified. Ottawa permitted 60 paid days of training as of 1954 and by 1957 a trained private was earning \$4.23 per day, which was not bad until one considers that the minimum wage that year in Ontario was \$1.00 per hour.⁴ New weapons were introduced, notably the 7.62 mm calibre FN C1 assault rifle that replaced the bolt-action Lee-Enfield, which had been around since the First World War. The militia's purpose was now to prepare for mobilization in a wartime role that would see them expand as units and reinforce a planned Canadian division in the NATO European forces. In 1954 the 4th Brigade, which included the Royals, the Queen's Own, the 48th Highlanders and the Toronto Scottish, held a brigade exercise at Camp Borden and summer camps, which has been infrequent during the first postwar decade, now became an annual feature.

The militia has always had a secondary task of aiding the civil power. In Toronto this duty became prominent when, on the night of 15-16 October 1954, Hurricane Hazel, a tropical storm, merged with a cold front over the city and dumped more



Infantry weapons, 1942–1989. In the middle of the Second World War, the Rifle No. 4 (top photo) was introduced. This was the last of the Lee-Enfield rifles to see Canadian service. This .303 calibre weapon had a 25-inch barrel, a 10-round magazine and an effective range of about 550 yards. It had a short spike bayonet called a "pig sticker" by soldiers. In 1955 the FN C1 Automatic Rifle (lower photo) began to replace the Rifle No. 4. This was a semi-automatic weapon firing a 7.62 mm NATO standard cartridge out to an effective range of 600-800 yards. The weapon had a 20-round magazine and weighed 10.5 lb. The FN C1 was replaced by the C-7 in the late 1980s. (Courtesy, Royal Winnipeg Rifles)

than three inches of rain in three hours. The result was flash floods up to 30 feet high and the loss of more than 50 bridges with the worst devastation being along the banks of the Humber River where much of one suburban street, Raymore Drive, was washed away causing the destruction of 14 residences. The militia were immediately called out to assist the civil authorities and elements of the Toronto Garrison, including the Royals and the Toronto Scottish, were assigned the grim task of searching the banks of the Humber for the bodies of 31 people from the area who were missing. The militia's participation gained laurels, respect and recognition.

As well as new weapons and equipment, new uniforms were also issued, including the useful summer "bush dress." The Royals, of course, had always been aware of the power of a scarlet tunic to attract recruits and in 1952 the unit managed to clothe the Baker Company in scarlets and bearskins, the first time their ceremonial uniform had been seen since 1939, and dispatched it around Toronto to aid in recruiting. The public had become used to seeing soldiers looking as drab and unremarkable as possible and reactions varied. Many in other Toronto militia units had caustic comments about what they called the "zoot-suit" soldiers, one officer remarking that

Those jimmy jackets and jerk hats will scare recruits away instead of attracting them. Kids these days don't want to look like tin soldiers even for parade. They want to look like



Cleaning up after Hurricane Hazel, 1954. Above, a work party of Royals cleans up after Hurricane Hazel. One of their tasks was searching for the bodies of 31 persons who were missing along the Humber River, which overflowed its banks and caused tremendous damage. (RRC Museum; Toronto Reference Library)

