

THE PROFESSIONAL ARMY, 1945–1968

‘I have found a certain atmosphere of the mercenary in Canadian battle units,’ wrote Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Fairlie Wood in his novel of Korea, *The Private War of Jacket Coates*. ‘Our units just hunker down in the country of operations, look around for a source of the local screech, get chummy with the village maidens, and enjoy the country.’ Of course, Wood added in the voice of his anti-hero, Jacket Coates, ‘We were all eager to get overseas ... the reasons ... rested entirely on the rumours generated by the letters we got from friends who were already there. A Korean girl charged one pound of sugar for her favours, we were told, and as for drink, beer was free. You could buy a jeep from a Yank for a bottle of rye ... It was no wonder that soldiers were turning down promotion in order to get on the next draft [for Korea].’¹

Crude as this comment was, Jacket Coates almost certainly caught the attitudes with which many Canadian soldiers went off to Korea. There was some idealism in the men of the Special Force, but for most that probably took second place to baser concerns, to a desire for adventure, and a love of soldiering. Many of the men who enlisted for Korea went on to serve in Canada’s brigade in NATO and, there and in Canada, they laid the basis for the nation’s Cold War military professionalism.

