

Executive Editor's Note

David Charters

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[See table of contents](#)

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Some four years ago, a delegation of faculty and graduate students from the University of New Brunswick, led by History Professor and then Dean of Arts Peter Kent, attended the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) at the University of Maryland, College Park. SHAFR had decided to hold its year 2000 meeting in Toronto, and the UNB delegation, encouraged by SHAFR's openness to the participation of Canadian scholars, offered to organize a symposium as part of the Toronto conference. Given the date, it seemed appropriate to use the occasion to mark the 50th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War.

When one of the UNB team moved to another institution, I inherited "the SHAFR file," not an unwelcome development, but a modest challenge nonetheless. As a modern (post-1945) military historian, I was fairly familiar with the broad outlines of the war. But I was a little out of my depth in its diplomatic aspects, which forced me to delve into the literature and to consult those more familiar with the field. Here, two of my then graduate students, Sarah-Jane Corke and Pat Fitzpatrick, were of great assistance. By the Spring of 1999 we had identified the leading and emerging scholars and had issued a call for papers. The response was most gratifying, and the result in June 2000 was a slate of 11 papers in four panels, addressing the origins of the war, wartime decision-making, international and domestic aspects, media coverage, and controversies. The papers explored new issues, offered evidence from previously untapped sources in Russia and China, and provided new perspectives on long-standing debates about the war. The sessions were well-attended, and generated wide-ranging and lively discussion. In the luncheon keynote address General (ret.) Bernard Trainor (USMC), now a fellow at the Kennedy School at Harvard, gave a personal and often amusing reminiscence of his experience in the war.

Impressed as I was by the quality of the contributions, and - as a journal editor - sensing the opportunity for a "theme issue," I approached Professor James Matray, who had presented one of the papers, to discuss the idea and the possibility of serving as Guest Editor. Jim's response was more enthusiastic than I had any right to expect, and so this issue was launched. The size of the *JCS* limited us to six papers, so we endeavored to select what we regarded as the best out of a very good bunch. It was not easy to choose; we hope that the final selection represents not only a good cross section of the papers presented, but also of the new perspectives and evidence on the war and the historical debates arising from it. Armed with a copy of our *User's Guide*, some back issues, and a broad editorial mandate, Jim set out to craft this issue. He read the papers, sent them out for comments, cajoled the authors, and then meticulously edited them for journal style. By the time they reached us this winter, there was little for us to do but to set them up for the printer. All of which made us wonder why we hadn't tried the Guest Editor route before!

Obviously, we are gratefully indebted to Jim for his very thorough editorial work on this issue. I know that we could not have done it better ourselves, and any credit for the quality of this issue must go to him. We are also grateful to the authors who contributed

their papers and patiently endured the editorial process. If this issue does contribute to advancement of knowledge and scholarship on the diplomatic history of the Korean War, then it is a tribute to their diligence. Thanks are due to several others, whose efforts brought about the symposium and thus this issue: Professor Andrew Johnston (University of Western Ontario), Professor Peter Kent (University of New Brunswick), Professor Margaret MacMillan (Ryerson University), Dr. Cathal Nolan (Boston University), Professor Geoff Smith (Queen's University), and Dr. Richard Wiggers (Department of Education, Province of New Brunswick). And, finally, thanks to SHAFR for the opportunity to hold the symposium.

David Charters
Executive Editor
April 2002