

confreres knew him — became in 1959 Canada's first government adviser as well as chief negotiator for disarmament. The post was not his through design; he was the choice of senior officials in the DEA, just as he had been the choice of the Department in 1954 to become Commander of the UN Truce Supervisory Force in the Middle East. As a DEA man, Burns was a peacekeeper *cum* diplomat, and the nearest approximation to the Department's ideal of renaissance man that it was likely to find.

Yet when the call came in 1959 to assume his diplomatic duties, Burns saw the position as a challenge and as a job that had to be done. At Geneva he always felt, as he put it, "like a reformed drunk at a Salvation Army meeting." Had the choice been his and not that of his minister, Howard Green, he would have relinquished his disarmament duties in 1962 rather than 1969 in order to head up the UN force in the Congo. Had the choice been Canada's Burns would again have relinquished his Geneva duties in 1964 in favor of peacekeeping in Cyprus. Burns saw the natural and inevitable relationship between peacekeeping and disarmament, which he tried to impress upon his colleagues at Geneva. In spirit, however, Burns was a peacekeeper before he was a disarmament diplomat — and not only because his tour of duty in the Middle East was closer to his chosen profession. As his years in Geneva wore on, he found the dialogues "desultory" and lamented, in harsh reference to a few of his colleagues, "the skeptical attitude of these rather dreary men." Yet in spirit Burns was also a soldier more than he was a peacekeeper; as a soldier, his chief concern was always with the defence of Canada, its people, and their allies.

### His military record

Burns's thirty years of soldiering had by all accounts been distinguished by valor on the battlefield and by a dedication to the principles of military professionalism. He won the Military Cross in 1916 for bravery at the Somme, and in October 1944 the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) of the British Empire for his command of the 1st Canadian Corps in the Italian Liri Valley. Yet he had been dismissed by his British superiors from his command in Italy with indecent haste after the honor of receiving the DSO, and no event was ever to prove more agonizing for him. In retirement Burns would recollect, calmly, that this command was by far his most important contribution as a Canadian public servant. His memoirs of World War II were the last he was to write, and when he had finished reading a history of the war in the Liri Valley he was left, in his words, "with a certain feeling of satisfaction at what had been accomplished under my command." Yet in 1949 he refused Charles Foulkes's suggestion that he return to military life in order to take over as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff. Burns felt that he had lost respect among the Canadian military as a consequence of his wartime dismissal.

Burns was not without opinion on imperial defence relations, and what he and others saw as the consequences for its troops of Canada's subordinate status in wartime to its great Anglo-Saxon allies. Burns in this sense was a nationalist and his greatest work, *Manpower in the Canadian Army*, reflected his nationalist as well as his professional soldierly concerns. But, although the British High Command bore ultimate responsibility for his dismissal, Burns's nationalism was never anti-British. Perhaps this

was because he was also an internationalist, as a peacekeeper but also as a soldier of Empire, by training and in intellect and imagination. These latter attributes of internationalism were provoked by his years at the Royal School of Engineers and the Imperial Defence College in England, and at Quetta, India. Burns was a soldier by training but a sailor by avocation, a gardener and pianist as well as peacekeeper and diplomat, and administrator, lecturer, scholar and engineer *cum* mapmaker. His proficiency here won him the Order of the British Empire in 1937. He was

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General Burns in Italy during World War II

also phenomenal, a Canadian military man-of-letters. Juvenal's words, from his *Satires*, had a personal meaning for Burns: "an inveterate itch to write, now incurable." The man who mused upon "Manners and Morals for Modern Maidens," who wrote as Arlington B. Conway for H.L. Mencken's *American Mercury* and who vacationed with the controversial gadfly, was also the man who twice in succession won the coveted Bertram Stewart Essay prize for the best military essay in the British Empire, and who held his own in correspondence with the celebrated strategist Liddell Hart; these too were attributes of Burns the internationalist.

### Man of peace

History and scholarship have yet to fully record Burns's true accomplishments as a soldier during the Italian campaign and as a peacekeeper in the Middle East. Little known to most of his compatriots, Burns had been nominated in 1956 — because of his work as commander of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) — for the Nobel Peace prize. At Geneva General Burns