

Something Lost in Translation?

By Dick Culver

Have you ever heard of the CIOR? No? Well, neither had I until the summer of 1977. I was assigned as the Operations Officer of the U.S. Marine Corps Marksmanship Training Unit at Quantico, Virginia. As a unit, MTU was tasked with (in extremely general terms) maintaining the marksmanship standards of Marine Corps Training, and researching new marksmanship concepts and techniques for the Marine Corps at the behest of the Training Branch of Headquarters Marine Corps.



CIOR Shield

Such duties included the study, experimentation and implementation of new combat marksmanship techniques and equipment. As a sort of “dipstick” to measure our success and progress in such endeavors, we also maintained a National Team of Rifle, Pistol and International Shooters to keep our shooting hand(s) in, and to butt heads with the other service teams; and to specifically to keep the U.S. Army and the Army’s Marksmanship Unit appropriately humble, heh, heh, heh... MTU would supervise the conduct of Marine Corps wide competition each year in four different geographical division matches. We had the Eastern Division Match, usually held on the East Coast (appropriate, eh what?), the Western Division Match (yep, you guessed it, on the West Coast), The Pacific Division Match held in Hawaii, and the Far Eastern Division Match normally conducted on Okinawa. Medal winners from each (geographical) Division Match then proceeded to a pre-designated location in the States (usually either Camp Lejeune, North Carolina or Quantico, Virginia), for further competition in the (All) Marine Corps Match. Winners and likely “comers” were then selected to comprise the “Summer Team” that would represent the Marine Corps at the National Matches at Camp Perry, Ohio.

Division Match Teams were/are required to have at least one officer and one “new shooter” to perpetuate continuing interest in service marksmanship and carry their new found skills (in the case of new shooters), and their continuing and constantly improving shooting and coaching talents back to the various Marine Corps units all over the globe.

During the summer of 1977 we were conducting our first official U.S. Marine Corps Scout Sniper School since the cessation of the Vietnam War. For our first class, generally speaking, we drew our students from the Division Match Competition from all over the Corps. Upon graduation from the (then) new course, the newly graduated snipers (also graduated from the “Sniper Instructor” segment of the instruction, returned to their respective Marine Divisions and formed a Scout Sniper School for each (tactical, not geographical) Division (i.e. 1st Marine Division Scout Sniper School, the 2nd Marine Division Scout Sniper School, etc.). Our first school, ably conducted by Captain Jack Cuddy (now Colonel Jack Cuddy, USMC [Ret.]), and Gunnery Sergeant Carlos Hathcock set the standard for all of the subsequent Scout Sniper Schools in other services. Our original training format has been shamelessly copied by virtually every serious military and police sniping effort in the world today. While the Sniper School doesn’t enter into the sea-story being related here, it gives a bit of flavor to the sort of organization we ran at Quantico at the time.

Prior to the arrival of our “Summer Team” in 1977, we were notified that MTU was to host a military marksmanship training course for the CIOR... Huh? Now what in the heck was the CIOR? Literally translated it stood for *Confédération Interalliée des Officiers de Réserve*

or in English, ***The Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers*** hence the CIOR designation.

The CIOR purports to be a non-political, non-governmental, non-profit-making organization dedicated to cooperation between the national Reserve Officers Associations of NATO countries, and to solidarity within the Atlantic Alliance, or to boil all the BS out of it, a loosely organized group of Reserve Officers from the NATO Allies. The outfit was founded in 1948 by the Reserve Officer Associations of Belgium, France and the Netherlands but now consists of all 18 Reserve Officer Associations in NATO countries.

These guys (in a sort of super boondoggle) assemble every summer in a prearranged, rotating NATO Country to discuss mutual “Defense Attitudes”, Security Issues, Civil/Military Cooperation, Mutual Communication. To top things off, finally, a group of athletically inclined Reserve Officers from each country get together for a sort of “Military Pentathlon Event” to include obstacle course running, orienteering and map reading, swimming, range estimation, hand grenade throwing, and shooting. The competing teams utilize the equipment and shooting irons of the host country to give each participating contingent a feel for their allies’ gear and capabilities. The shooting segment is where we fit into the equation that summer.

As pointed out above, by mutual agreement, each country competes in the marksmanship competition with the weapons of the host country (since the host country rotates on a yearly basis, the participants get to utilize such diverse fowling pieces as the M16A2 [and the Canadian version called the C7A1], the British L85, the Austrian Steyr AUG Rifle, the HK G3, the Beretta Pistol, the Glock Pistol, and of course, the ubiquitous Browning High Power). While checking the current rules as background information, I noted they no longer list “*submachine gun marksmanship*” but it was still on the agenda in the Summer of 1977. Since the Host Country was to be “Mother England” that year, the rifle was to be the FN/FAL (or the Canadian version designated the L1A1), the Pistol was to be the Browning High Power, and the Submachine Gun was the British designed Sterling L2A3.

MTU got the nod to teach marksmanship techniques, while the Marine Corps Officer’s Basic School was assigned the job of polishing up the CIOR lads in the physical, swimming and map reading pursuits.

The young lieutenants taking advantage of our instructional efforts were composed of some Americans, but the majority were Canadian Reserve Officers, of which a large group were from Quebec, i.e. what would be usually characterized as French Canuks.



The Canadian/British L2A3

To appreciate the story, the Canadian Government had only recently decreed that French was to be the official language of Quebec (late 1969) and not given any legal teeth until 1977¹, thus making it (officially) unnecessary for Canadian Soldiers from Quebec to speak or (supposedly to understand) English. Indeed, Canada had all but granted Quebec their defacto independence from Canada proper. The French Canuks were fully aware that it was a sore spot to the rest of Canada, but being appropriately contrary, they insisted on speaking only French if for no other reason, as a matter of honor, and to urinate-off those who felt the French Canuks were essentially officious, obnoxious and objectionable pricks! The short

version is that they were attempting to rub the English speaking North American countries nose in it!

The “French only” routine was a farce of course, as these blighters had grown up in Canada when English was the official language and anyone *not* speaking English would not have survived. The Frogs, having smelled blood in the water, blackmailed the Canadian Government into this idiotic concession (see footnote 1 below). Unfortunately political correctness had taken over, but not all hands were exactly ecstatic about the situation. The “no spikada English” routine is the essence of our story. Read on...

The rifles, pistols and submachine guns had been shipped to MTU by the Canadian Government along with sufficient 9mm fodder to feed the Browning Pistol and the Sterling SMG (don't forget it would be another 10 years before the 9mm cartridge became our official pistol cartridge). Now we had lots of individuals qualified to teach the rifle and pistol, but we had virtually no volunteers to teach the sub-gun. I had an interest in short full automatic weapons and had become right clever with the old Thompson Submachine Gun, so I was elected as the submachine gun instructor almost by default. This just suited me down to a “T” and I set about learning everything I could about the “Sterling Gun”. I had been taught some years earlier by a friendly FBI Agent (mercifully using someone else's TSMG), to put a full 30-round magazine of .45 Auto rounds into the chest of an E-Silhouette Target at 25-yards with a single pull of the trigger... It wasn't hard to do, but was a bit abusive to the rifling. I set about learning what to expect from the Sterling.

The included training manual accompanying the weapons indicated that the L2A3 weighed in at just shy of 6-pounds, was selective fire, had a cyclic rate of 550-rounds per minute and had a magazine capacity of 34-rounds. It was cute (but ugly), easy to handle and in my opinion was ergonomically well designed. I repaired to the pistol range with ample ammunition to educate myself in the ways of the Sterling, and it wasn't long before I could empty an entire 34-round magazine into the chest of the E-Silhouette with a single pull of the trigger. The trick was simply grabbing the magazine well (which stuck out the left side of the receiver – see the illustration above) with the left hand (palm up), leaning forward for the initial trigger squeeze and simply use it like a fire hose. It was amazingly accurate and lots of fun to shoot. I was charmed.

Having taught the HK MP-5 for a full year (some 16-years following this training evolution), in my personal opinion, the Sterling is superior in virtually every respect (except it isn't quite a sexy looking). The Sterling is blowback operated and not overly complicated with the HK roller locking system, weighs a bit less than the standard MP5, and is the more accurate of the two (or at least easier to *shoot* accurately). While I don't have the exact figures, I rather suspect that the Sterling is much cheaper to manufacture than the current darling of the Submachine Gun world, and easier to repair on a flat rock! Ah well... If you were stuck with the miserable little 9mm cartridge, the Sterling would be my choice, but then beauty and functionality are often in the eye of the beholder.

Having familiarized myself with my L2A3 training aid, I was looking forward to the following day's instruction. ...alas I reckoned without the “*French Connection*”.

On to the Submachine Gun Instruction:

The morning of the first instructional session dawned well enough, and a seemingly enthusiastic group of individuals gathered at the pistol range. My first impression was that things would go well, but the group had more or less divided itself into three distinct bunches.

The American officers had been mingling with their Canadian cousins, but the Canadians had broken up into two distinct groups. One of the Canadian officers approached me with a sort of “hat in hand” demeanor. He was seemingly apologizing for the fact that one group of the lads didn’t speak English, but only French and were from Quebec. Their English speaking spokesman relayed the Frog’s request (demand?) that they have an interpreter assigned so that they could understand the instruction. Huh? Whatin’hell were these guys talking about? I knew damned well that they understood English, but apparently they were making some sort of political (or ethnic) statement that would materially complicate their (and my) instruction. Oh well, I’d play their game for awhile and see how things worked out.

Well into the safety lecture, these pseudo-Frenchmen were skylarking and joking among themselves, knowing the interpreter would give them the safety lecture in French. After several examples of this farce, I decided to bust their “male sperm reproductive organs”. Simple instruction was one thing, but I wasn’t about to let the *safety* lecture go the French “shoulder shrug” route, ...and I of course, would receive the blame if one of these Frog-Eaters shot himself or somebody because he hadn’t understood the instruction. During our first break, I got the Gunny aside and told him to follow my lead, I was going to get rid of this scam once and for all!

“Whatcha got in mind Major?” the Gunny says.

“Just listen up and nod your head, and you’ll get the picture”

“Hey Gunny,” sez I, in a rather loud stage whisper, “have you ever seen a Frenchman who wouldn’t rather have sex with a sheep than a woman?” (using slightly more crude terminology).

The Gunny looked at me funny, but immediately caught what I was trying to accomplish.

“No sir, can’t say as I have,” he replied, “what’s more I understand that many of them prefer men!,” The Gunny was giving me just what I wanted.

About 15 heads, (all in the pseudo-French group) snapped around as one! All of those clowns had “*if looks could kill*” facial expressions! Hummm... I thought so!

“Ah ha you @\$holes, I caught ya’! I knew damned well you understood English, now we can knock off this phony crap and get on with the instruction!”

Fifteen appropriately chastised French Canuks hung their heads and laughed. I had caught them at their own game. The rest of the instruction went well, all taught in English. We all left friends, laughing about the put-up “no spikada English” dodge. I’m reasonably sure some of the Nuevo-French Canuks still tell the story to **their** kids now in the light of some 27-years past. I would dearly love to have sat in on the map reading and orienteering classes taught at the Basic School after they left those “ruffians” at the pistol range!

Nothing is more fun than winning and turning the tables on a bunch of jokers who had planned to show those “insolent colonials” who was really in charge. Surprising that they never figured out how **they** have remained subjects, and **we** emerged as citizens of a Republic. Even Mother England was happy to see us a time or two on the continent to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. The French still haven’t come to grips with the fact that they are no longer relevant in international affairs... And those guys wanted to speak “French” to identify their national origin?... Egad!

Semper Fi,

ROC

End Notes:

¹ The idiocy of this policy of the Canadian Government started with the Official Languages' Act of Canada issued in 1969 making French the official language of Quebec. This was followed and enforced by Bill 101, titled *Charte de la langue française*. The bill, **as it was passed in the summer of 1977**, proclaimed French as the official language in Quebec for just about every facet of life in the province: government, judicial system, education, advertising, business, contracts, etc. For example, the bill required that all advertising on billboards be done in French only and that all commercial signs in business establishments be in French alone. All public administrations and businesses had to address their employees in French. All government agencies were directed to use the Official language in their dealings with corporations and other governments in Canada. Government Ministries and Agencies, as well as professional associations in Quebec, were to be known by their French name. The laws of the province were to be enacted in French although an English translation might also be made (and indeed continued to be made after bill 101). English education was to be restricted mostly to those already in the system, their siblings, those temporarily posted in Quebec or whose parents had themselves received an English elementary education in the province. While the bill was very prescriptive in several respects, it showed considerable flexibility in connection to businesses, especially head offices of international and national corporations centered in Quebec. While francization programs were instituted for businesses, they were limited to businesses of more than 50 employees.

Culver's Note: No wonder the Canadian Government is so screwed up! We must avoid this idiotic trap (sought by many Spanish speaking elements) to divide our country. In a word, either learn English, and American History, or don't vote and better yet, pack your bags and head for the southern border. Put simply, our way or the highway! A pox on multiculturalism!