

**RCI**



**RADIO CANADA  
INTERNATIONAL**

# Radio Canada International

# 50

1945 - 1995

**51<sup>st</sup> Anniversary**  
1945-1996

*Canada's International Voice for 51 Years*





The Radio-Canada Building in Montréal



Transmitting Plant at Sackville, NB in 1945

## CANADA SPEAKS TO THE WORLD

On February 25, 1945, a new international broadcast service made its debut on the world scene. It was a time of war between nations but with the promise of peace in sight. Into those dark but hopeful times the voice of Prime Minister W. L. Mackenzie King welcomed the world to a new shortwave service dedicated to projecting the Canadian view of life and events. Thus was born the CBC International Service, now known as Radio Canada International.

The idea for creating an international radio voice for Canada was first proposed as far back as the 1930's. Several studies commissioned by the CBC Board of Governors had come to the conclusion that Canada needed a radio service to broadcast the Canadian point of view to the world. By the early 1940's, this need was also recognized by a series of Parliamentary Broadcasting Committees. Finally, in 1942, Prime Minister King announced that Canada would begin a shortwave radio service that would keep members of the Canadian Armed Forces in touch with news and entertainment from home. The CBC International Service became a reality with the signing of an Order-in-Council on September 18, 1942.

Over the next two and a half years, a great deal of work went into building the new service. One of the first issues faced by the new staff was where to locate the studios and transmitting facilities. It was decided to locate the studios in the Radio-Canada building in downtown Montréal while the transmitters would be installed at Sackville, New Brunswick. Montréal was an ideal studio location since the CBC had extensive production facilities and plenty of English and French broadcasters available to host programs. Sackville was chosen after a careful study had been made of radio transmissions between Canada and Europe. During 1943, two 50 kW transmitters and a network of antennas were built.

By the end of 1944, both the production facilities and the transmitting plant were ready for test broadcasts. These tests, which began on December 25, 1944, were broadcast to Canadian troops in Europe in both English and French. Although these programs were only transmitter tests, a small regular audience of Canadian troops and Europeans developed. The tests continued for two months before the transmitters and studio links were declared sound. In early 1945, it was announced that the CBC International Service was ready and would go on the air for real on February 25.



Prime Minister King Opens the CBC IS



The CBC International Service Newsroom in 1946

## "THIS IS CANADA" 1945-1955

The early years of the CBC International Service were marked by rapid growth and popularity. When the service went on the air in 1945, programs were broadcast in three languages — English, French and German. All three were targeted to Great Britain and western Europe, providing a total of six hours of programming daily. Right from the start, international audiences began to tune in the new station. Reports at the time indicated that the International Service had the clearest shortwave signals from North America.

But reception alone didn't make the International Service popular. Quality programs were also a major factor. Drawing on its mandate to inform the world about Canadian life and culture, the International Service produced dramas, news magazines, commentaries and musical programs. One of the most popular English programs was called *Canadian Chronicle*. This was a 15-minute daily program featuring many distinguished Canadian journalists and commentators. Every program was a daily survey of people and happenings in Canada. The subjects were as varied as can be. One night, listeners might hear a current affairs talk by Wilfrid Eggleston or George Ferguson and the next night a report on a prairie cattle show by agricultural broadcaster Hugh Boyd. Above all, *Canadian Chronicle* always answered the question "What is life like in Canada?"

Similar programs were broadcast in French and German. The French broadcasts featured such diverse programs as a history of the French language, press and political revues, science and economic magazines and aviation in Canada. One program, *Les Actualités Canadiennes*, is still on the air 50 years later. The German service also concentrated on a varied schedule. There were programs on Canadian sports, music and culture. *Für die Frau* was a magazine devoted to women and was one of the most popular of the German programs.

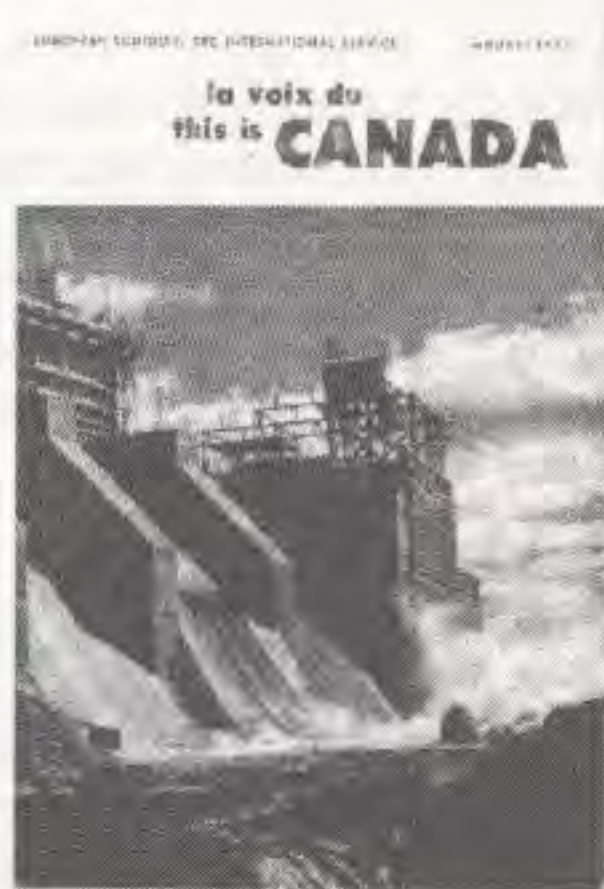
By 1946, the CBC International Service had expanded to include regular transmissions in Czech and Dutch. Beginning in July, special once-a-week programs were broadcast to Scandinavia in Swedish and Danish and later in Norwegian as well. In November, daily broadcasts started to the Caribbean in English. There were also Sunday night programs broadcast to Cuba, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador in Spanish and to Brazil in Portuguese. Daily Spanish and Portuguese transmissions began on July 6, 1947.

At around the same time as the expansion into the Caribbean and Latin America, the CBC International Service became involved with the newly formed United Nations. As one of only a handful of international broadcasters at that time, the International Service was asked to provide transmission facilities for daily UN broadcasts. The programs were produced at the United Nations radio facility at Lake Success, New York in the USA and fed by phone lines to Sackville. These broadcasts proved critical to the UN when it needed to get its point of view across to the world during the post-World War II and Korean War periods. United Nations broadcasts through the CBC International Service continued until November 29, 1952 when they were transferred to larger shortwave facilities run by the Voice of America.

More expansions of the International Service followed. In mid-1947, an English service to Australia and New Zealand began. One of the most popular English programs, *Listener's Corner*, also began in mid-1947. The once-a-week mailbag program was hosted by Liston Burns. An Italian service was started in January, 1949 while a once-a-week broadcast in Finnish began in December, 1950. The International Service even featured a reporter who later went on to become a major figure in Canadian history. This reporter was René Lévesque, who hosted many programs for the French service. Thirty-years later, Lévesque became the Premier of Québec.

Throughout its early years, the International Service had concentrated on broadcasting to Western Europe in the aftermath of World War II. By the early 1950's, the Cold War had descended over Eastern Europe. Suddenly, millions of people lost their ability to hear an unbiased account of the world's news. Several international shortwave stations, including the International Service, began to beam programs into the Iron Curtain countries in an effort to let those people know what was really happening around them.

The International Service had already been broadcasting in Czech and Slovak when a Russian service was started in January, 1951. This was followed by a Ukrainian service in September, 1952 and a Polish service just a year after that. Canadians who spoke those languages, and occasionally defectors from the Iron Curtain, regularly provided uncensored news, comments and reports about Canada and about Eastern Europe. Along with other international stations, the IS broadcasts gave hope to a population that had no other such source.



Examples of CBC International Service Program Schedules from 1949, 1951 and 1954

## THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE IN TRANSITION 1955-1961

By late 1954, the CBC International Service was broadcasting over 16 hours of programming daily. It was during the final months of that year that the Service underwent the first of several reorganizations that would take place over its 50-year history. With the Cold War expanding, and an unexpected reduction in its operating budget, the International Service decided to direct its remaining resources to Eastern European audiences. This meant that some languages were cut back while others expanded.

One of the casualties of this reorganization was the termination of the Finnish service on January 29, 1955. It was the first time a language service had been discontinued and sadly it would not be the last. The next day, a completely new schedule went into effect. Both the English and French services were significantly reduced. Prior to the change, there had been three English broadcasts to Europe and one each to the United States and Australasia. Under the new schedule, there was only one broadcast to each target area. On the positive side, the service to Australasia was increased from twice weekly to daily.

The French service was reduced even more than the English. Where there had been three European and one Caribbean broadcasts, there was now only a single European transmission. Also cut back were the Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish services. However, other languages benefited from the new schedule. German programs increased from 45 minutes to an hour. The Czech/Slovak service gained a broadcast as did the Polish service. Russian broadcasts increased 50-percent.

As the CBC International Service continued to evolve, its programming also changed. In the mid-1950's, there was a great need for factual programs which dealt with the world condition and Canada's place in it. There was less emphasis on the music and dramatic programs that the International Service had relied on since its inception.



Charles Delafield, the Director of the CBC International Service in 1958

All transmissions began with a news bulletin and a commentary. Such English programs as *Canadian Magazine* and *Overhead in Canada*, and French programs such as *La Vie au Canada* gave overseas listeners a vivid account of Canadian attitudes and lifestyles. Yet, there still was a place for the warm person-to-person atmosphere that International Services announcers were famous for, as evidenced by the continued popularity of *Listener's Corner* and *Le Coin des Auditeurs*.

Lucile Richard was the Secretary for both the Spanish and Portuguese sections of the CBC International Service in 1958



As the decade ended, the International Service once again was modestly expanding and began to add music programs back into its line-up. In 1960, a listener could hear *Jazz at its Best* or *Canadian Concert* in English or *Alouette* in French. Drama returned through programs such as *Les Images du Canada* and *Canadian Showcase*. There was even a program about hockey broadcast on Tuesdays to French listeners in Europe.

## BUILDING A STRONGER SIGNAL 1961-1968

The decade of the sixties and early seventies marked enormous change in the mission and structure of the CBC International Service. It began with a complete re-organization of the Service in March, 1961. At that time, facing another unexpected budgetary cut, the CBC decided that broadcasts to Western Europe were not as important as they had been previously. It was more important to concentrate on broadcasting to Eastern Europe where there was a definite need for news and current events.

With its reduced budget, the International Service could not continue many of its long-standing language services while expanding its coverage to the Iron Curtain. On March 4, 1961, the Danish, Dutch, Italian, Norwegian, and Swedish services were all discontinued. In addition, the German service was reoriented from its previous emphasis on West Germany to focusing on East Germany. New English and French programs directed to Africa were added giving the International Service direct coverage of every continent except Asia (which was covered indirectly by the English South Pacific service).



Maryse Reicher, host of *Le Coin des Auditeurs*

CBC International Service broadcasts emphasized a much more personal tone in the sixties. The Service felt that its message would be better understood if it were presented in a more familiar way. This attitude earned the International Service a long-standing reputation of being "your friend on shortwave." Thousands of listeners eagerly welcomed Maryse Reicher and Earle Fisher, the hosts of the French and English language mailbag programs, into their homes each week. A new Country Music program, *Country Style*, made its debut. The Service even started a program, *Announcers Choice*, where listeners could request music selections that would be played over the air.

A major event in the history of the CBC International Service occurred on September 2, 1962 when a third transmitter was inaugurated at Sackville, New Brunswick. The new 50 kW facility significantly improved coverage in Europe and Africa. It also allowed additional broadcast hours to be added to the schedule that formerly had to be given over to the CBC Armed Forces and CBC Northern Services. For the first time, transmissions from Sackville could be directed to two different target areas if needed. This type of service was eventually put into effect in September, 1964 with the introduction of a simultaneous broadcast to both Europe and the United States.



Earle Fisher, host of *Listeners Corner*



(Left) Pip Duke, Elaine McMaster and Duncan Nicholson host a weekly meeting of the Radio Canada Shortwave Club

(Right) A member's certificate from the Radio Canada Shortwave Club



In 1963, the Radio Canada Shortwave Club was created. Founded by Basil "Pip" Duke, the Club was organized to introduce listeners to the hobby of shortwave radio listening or SWling. The Club kept a membership list, which was published once a year, and also issued various bulletins and technical publications, the most popular of which was the Club's *Antenna Handbook*. Several of the language services produced Club programs which were broadcast weekly. The English version was hosted by Duke, Duncan Nicholson and Elaine McMaster. The French version, *Allo DX*, was hosted by Jean-Louis Huard and Yvan Leclerc. The German version was hosted by Max Fleck and Gerd Pick. There were also versions in Czech, Polish and Portuguese.

Technically, the CBC International Service was concentrating on improving its signal to Europe. Throughout the late fifties and early sixties, the CBC had been experimenting with a new technique where signals from Sackville were picked up by a receiving station in Britain, recorded on tape, and rebroadcast to Eastern Europe via transmitters owned by the BBC. These relay broadcasts had proven to be successful. However, since they were of a test nature, even though actual Russian, Ukrainian, Czech, and Polish programs were used, the relays were not listed in the CBC International Service program schedule.

This changed on May 1, 1966 when the first operational relay transmission was broadcast to Africa via BBC transmitters located at Daventry, Great Britain. Unlike the previous tests, this BBC relay carried the programs live as they were being received from Sackville. Listeners in Africa reported strong signals. The success of this first operational relay service convinced the CBC and BBC to expand the arrangement. In March, 1967, all of the previous test broadcasts to Eastern Europe were converted into operational broadcasts and listed in the International Service program schedules.

The CBC International Service played a major role in covering Canada's Centennial celebrations in 1967. Ceremonies from coast to coast were carried over shortwave to the world on July 1, 1967 as Canada marked its 100th birthday. Throughout the previous year, the International Service broadcast programs dealing with Canadian history with a special emphasis on the events leading up to Confederation. An essay contest was held with 12 winners receiving all-expense paid trips to Montréal to visit Expo 67. The theme of the contest was "Man and His World," the theme of Expo itself.

During Expo 67, many of the shortwave broadcasts to Europe and the United States originated from the CBC International Broadcast Centre, located on the Expo grounds. This gave the audience a good idea of the events and attractions that were part of the International Exposition. In addition, the CBC served as the host international broadcaster, providing studio facilities at Expo to allow other international broadcasters to spread the news about Expo and Canada in general.

## NEW FINANCES, NEW NAME 1968-1971

Although most listeners never noticed it, a major change in the structure of the CBC International Service took place in April, 1968. From its inception in 1945, the International Service was always run and managed by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. However, the CBC did not actually own the International Service. Instead, the Service was defined as a separate entity, controlled by the Parliament of Canada through the Department of External Affairs. A separate budget for the International Service was approved each year by the Parliament with appropriate grants given to the CBC to fund the Service. This changed in 1968 when the International Service was fully integrated into the CBC's funding structure. Now, International Service financing was to be included in the full CBC budget.

Another significant change that took place during this period was the renaming of the CBC International Service. In July, 1970, the service was renamed Radio Canada International. The change took place because it was felt that RCI should have its own identity, separate from the CBC domestic network, even though RCI had just been fully integrated into the CBC system. Because the international service had been using the "CBC" name, it was occasionally confused with the domestic service. Now, with a unique name, everyone would know the difference.

The late 1960's and early 1970's saw more and more young people tuning into international shortwave radio stations. Radio Canada International recognized this trend and began providing programs designed to entertain and inform a younger audience. For example, Marie-Hélène Poirier and Robert Belaye hosted a music and friendship program called *33-45-73 Spécial-Jeunes* on French broadcasts. They played the latest pop music from Canada and the world as well as read letters over the air from young people.

Continuing its reputation of being "your friend on shortwave", a number of informal conversation programs such as *John and Louise*, *Coffee Break*, and *Anecdotes Canadiennes* were broadcast. RCI also turned its attention to providing listeners with a Canadian view of events from their own regions. In the African service, there was *African Commentary*, as well as the daily *Magazine* program broadcast to all the target areas. In French, listeners could hear *La Semaine en Afrique* and *Visa pour l'Amérique Latine*. Other languages had programs with similar themes. All of these programs provided a forum for commentators to analyze world events as they were viewed in Canada.



Bobbi Gushue and Jim Coward



Marie-Hélène Poirier and Robert Belaye

## A WORLD-CLASS BROADCASTER 1971-1991

The 20 years between 1971 and 1991 were a time of growth and expansion for RCI, both technically and also in programming. There were new production facilities, more powerful transmitters, and new languages on the schedule. RCI was becoming a recognized world-class service with an impact far beyond its size.

The first milestone occurred on November 7, 1971 when RCI inaugurated new 250 kW transmitters which were five times more powerful than the existing units. This significantly improved RCI's signal quality in Europe and Africa. Initially, two transmitters were brought on-line. Eventually, three additional units were activated which gave RCI almost complete global coverage.



Jean-Louis Huard, host of Allo DX

The experience with Daventry led RCI to consider other arrangements to broadcast its programs from transmitters located nearer to an intended target area. In 1972, RCI concluded an agreement with Radio Deutsche Welle to use its Sines, Portugal facility to relay RCI broadcasts to the Soviet Union. The Sines facility was operated by a division of Deutsche Welle known as Radio Trans-Europe. Rather than pay Radio Trans-Europe to provide the relay service, RCI came up with a unique solution. In return for air time on the Sines transmitters, RCI would give an equal amount of air time from Sackville to Deutsche Welle. The German broadcaster readily agreed since it would now have a clear signal into North America and the Caribbean.

Even with the new transmitters, there were still areas where RCI's signal was not very strong. Since 1966, parts of Africa had been covered by relay transmitters from the BBC located at Daventry in the UK. Additional Daventry transmitters had been covering Eastern Europe since 1967 (with test broadcasts even earlier). These proved to be so successful that RCI purchased two of the Daventry transmitters from the BBC. It was the first time that RCI had owned overseas facilities. In order to fully integrate the new transmitters into RCI's network, a satellite link was established between RCI's Montréal studios and Daventry. Listeners immediately noticed the improved quality of the Daventry broadcasts.

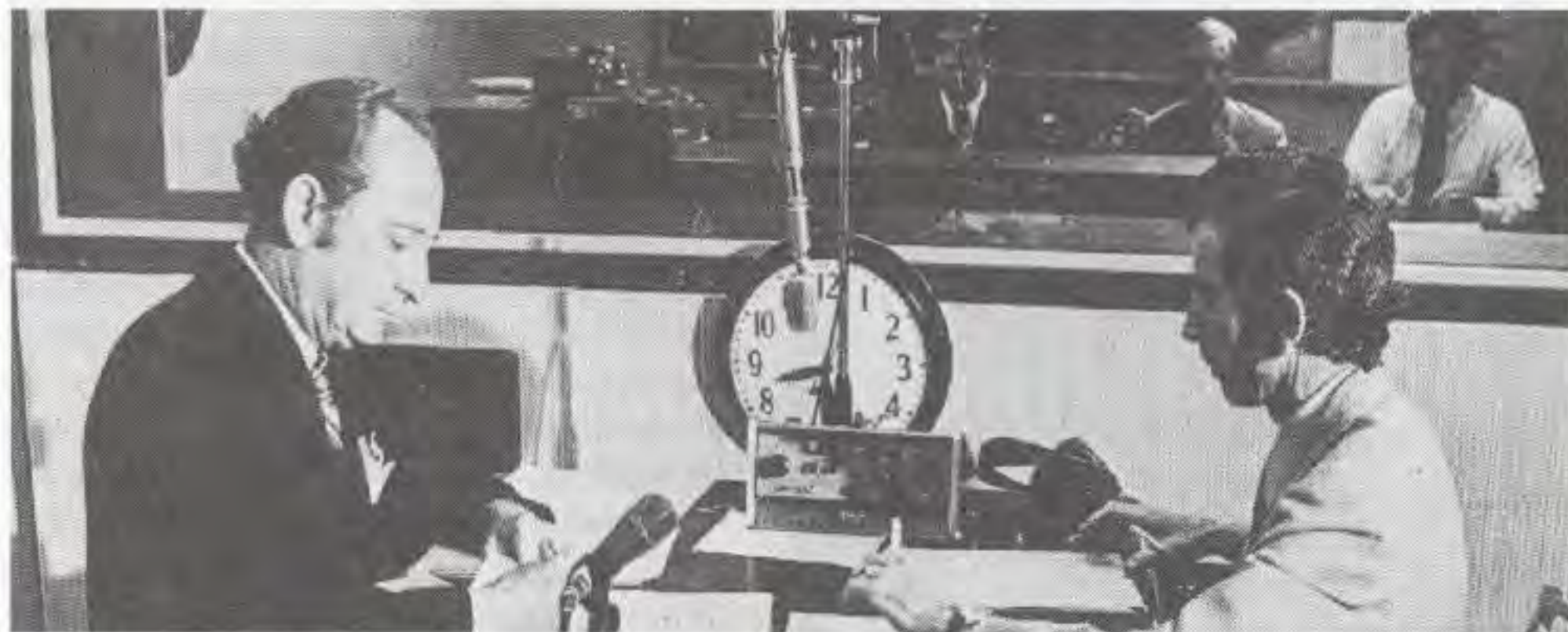


Françoise Borel

The Sines site also proved to be very successful. Located on the western coast of Portugal, Sines could easily receive RCI broadcasts directly off-the-air from Sackville or from the Daventry site. Initially, Sines was used to broadcast Russian and Ukrainian programs in the early morning and late afternoon.

A third relay site was added in late 1974 when RCI began using the Deutsche Welle relay at Cyclops, Malta to cover Africa, Europe and the Middle East. This was short-lived however. An apparent political dispute between Malta and Canada caused RCI to abruptly discontinue broadcasts from Cyclops on May 28, 1975.

Until 1972, virtually all of Radio Canada International's broadcasts had originated from the Radio-Canada building in downtown Montréal. While this provided adequate production facilities, technology had accelerated and the Radio-Canada studios were out-of-date. The CBC Domestic Network had already decided to move to a new building, La Maison de Radio-Canada, which was being built specifically for Canada's national network. Accordingly, it made sense to move Radio Canada International into the same facility.



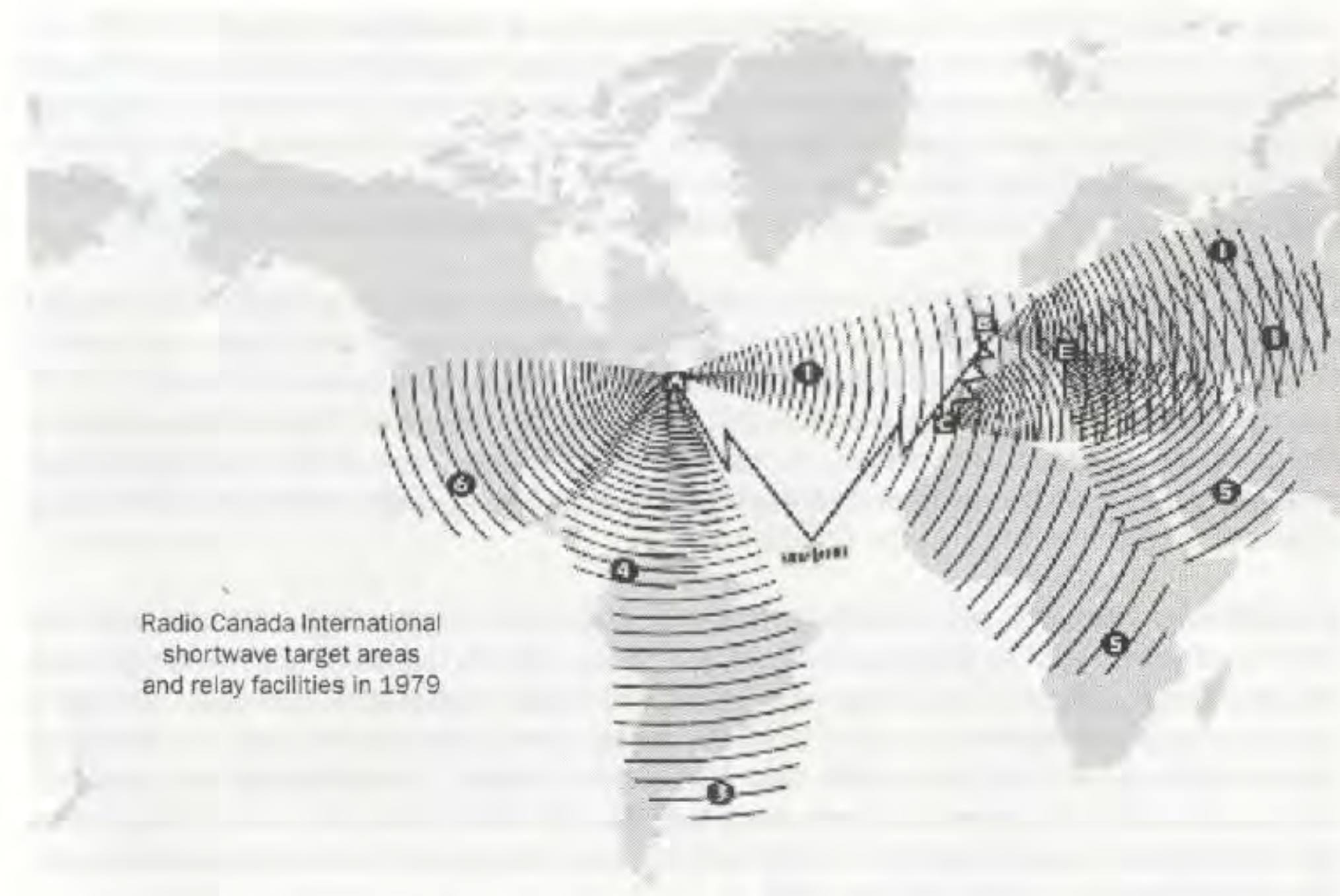
Ted Miller and Sheridan Nelson are the first RCI announcers to broadcast from La Maison de Radio-Canada on June 19, 1972

In an operation reminiscent of a lightning military campaign, Radio Canada International moved its entire operations to La Maison over the weekend of June 17-18, 1972. Despite having to move all 11 language sections and all of the equipment needed to produce its broadcasts, RCI did not miss a single transmission during the weekend. RCI's first transmission from La Maison de Radio-Canada was a program to Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean at 8:15 a.m. on Monday, June 19.

RCI was located on the first four floors of the 23-storey La Maison, near the building's radio production facilities. At the time, La Maison was one of the most modern production facilities in the world with 26 radio studios, master control facilities and a three-storey full-colour television studio.



Scenes from inside La Maison de Radio-Canada



Radio Canada International shortwave target areas and relay facilities in 1979

Throughout the remainder of the seventies, Radio Canada International continued to expand and revise its programming. For example, in 1975, RCI changed its English language program format. Since 1955, most RCI broadcasts were presented as a series of programs lasting from 5 to 15 minutes each. These were preceded by a news bulletin and sometimes by a sports summary. In late-1975, RCI adopted a new magazine format which incorporated many of the previously separate programs into a single program.

Among the programs which were left out of this consolidation were two long-standing productions — the *Radio Canada Shortwave Club* and *Listeners Corner*. The Shortwave Club program had been on the air since 1963 and was canceled due to the disbanding of the Club for budgetary reasons. An even larger casualty was *Listeners Corner* which by 1975 had been on the air for almost 30 years. Most of that time the program had been hosted by Earle Fisher. He retired in June, 1972 and the program was turned over to Bob MacGregor. However, when the change in programming was made, *Listeners Corner* did not fit into the new magazine format.

Both programs were bid adieu on November 1, 1975 in a combined broadcast that featured MacGregor, Fisher, producer Ian McFarland, Pip Duke, Elaine McMaster and Duncan Nicholson. Ironically, the mailbag and shortwave programs broadcast by RCI's other language services were allowed to continue. And, just two years later, RCI was able to bring back both an English listeners' mailbag show and a shortwave hobby program.

Also in late 1975, RCI made the decision to begin broadcasting non-RCI produced programs on a regular basis. In the past, RCI had occasionally rebroadcast programs created by the CBC Domestic Network. Now, RCI planned to regularly broadcast the CBC newscast *The World at Six* and a portion of the current affairs program *As It Happens* to audiences in the United States. Proving popular with American audiences, these programs paved the way for more CBC Domestic shows to appear on RCI.

At the end of 1979, RCI was broadcasting seven hours of programming daily to North America, four and a half to South America, four to Africa, one to the Middle East, five and a half to Western Europe, and four and a half to Eastern Europe. There were 11 language services: English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German, Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech, Slovak and Hungarian. Most of the broadcasts were still originating from Sackville with European and African programs also broadcast from Daventry, Sines and Berlin.

The decade of the 1980's saw Radio Canada International solidify its position as one of the world's most trusted broadcasters. Continued coverage to Eastern Europe, especially late in the decade, was one small but important element in helping to ignite the eventual changes that swept across Eastern Europe. Coverage to the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America was expanded. In the fall of 1985, the three 50 kW transmitters at Sackville were replaced with more powerful 100 kW models. This further improved RCI's signals to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Throughout its first 39 years, RCI had been primarily concerned with broadcasting to the south and to the east of Canada. In 1984, RCI made the decision to look westward for a new audience — Japan. For many years, Radio Canada International had been considering the establishment of a Japanese service. Several test transmissions were conducted, both from Sackville and from a site near Vancouver, British Columbia but none were totally satisfactory. However, in the spring of 1984, RCI and Radio Tanpa of Chiba, Japan entered into an arrangement which allowed RCI to begin regular broadcasts in Japanese. The first program aired on May 6, 1984.

Five years later, a Chinese language service was started. Canada and China had maintained a close relationship since 1971 when Canada became the first major Western power to recognize the People's Republic. It was only natural that when it became technically possible to reach China by shortwave radio, RCI would begin a Chinese service.

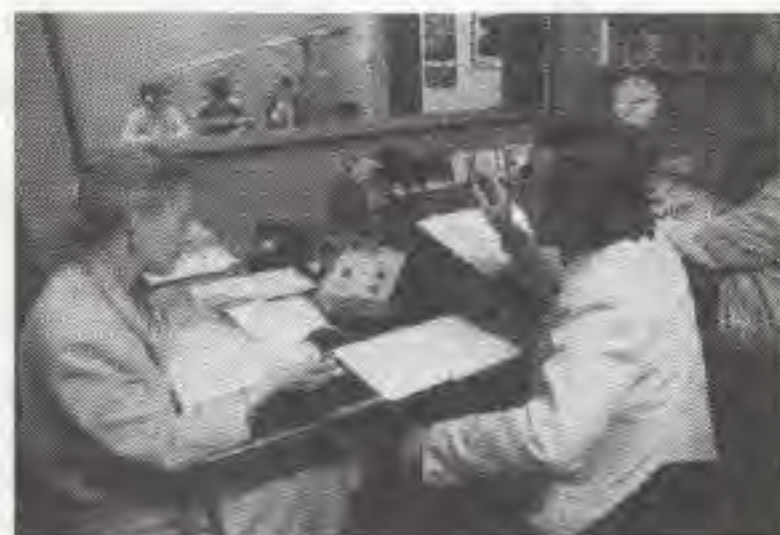
Before beginning shortwave broadcasts, RCI produced a 40-week series called *Everyday English* which was broadcast in 1988 and early 1989 over local stations in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. The series was designed to teach Chinese listeners how to speak common English. It was the first time an international broadcaster had tailor-made a "learn to speak English" course for a specific target audience. With an estimated audience of almost 20 million, the course was a huge success.

While *Everyday English* was running in China, RCI prepared to start shortwave broadcasts to the People's Republic. Since Sackville was not capable of providing a consistently strong signal to China, RCI agreed to exchange transmission time with Radio Japan's Yamata facility. This not only provided RCI with a clear signal to China but also allowed RCI to improve its signal to Japan and to Eastern Asia and India. Once the agreement with Radio Japan was in place, Chinese broadcasts began on October 1, 1989.



Akira Shigematsu of the RCI Japanese Service, 1987 (Left)

The production staff of *Everyday English*, an RCI program broadcast in China in 1988 (Right)



Just 10 months after beginning the Chinese broadcasts, RCI started a series of Arabic broadcasts to the Middle East. This coincided with the United Nations effort in the Persian Gulf to support the American Desert Shield operation of which Canada was a participant. The first broadcasts consisted of 10 minute news bulletins that were inserted into RCI's regular English and French broadcasts to the Middle East. Shortly afterward, these were expanded into two 30 minute broadcasts which included news and commentaries.

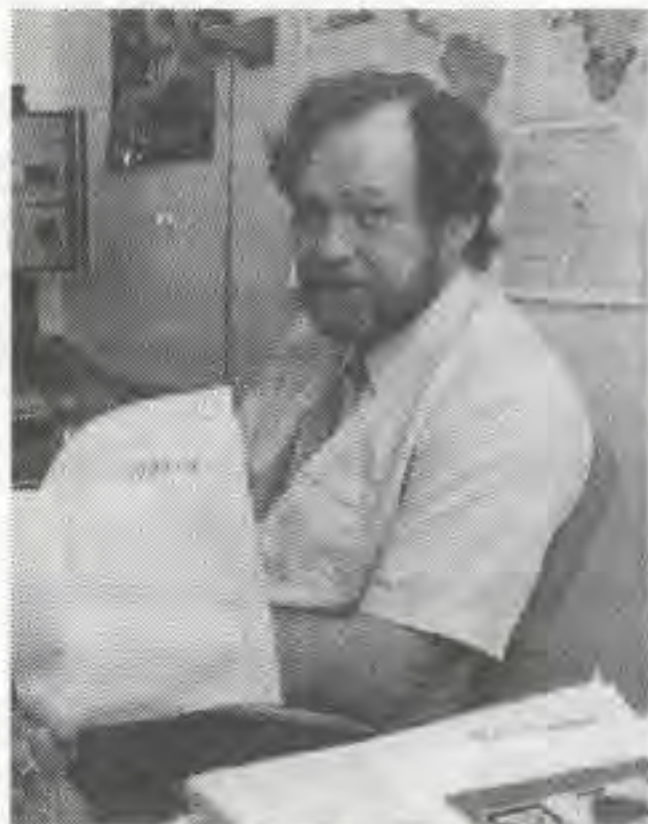
Despite the success of the service in general, and in particular the new Chinese and Arabic services, Radio Canada International faced its biggest challenge ever in 1990 and early 1991. Indeed, at issue was no less than the survival of RCI itself. Throughout the 1980's, RCI had absorbed several budget cutbacks. These were dealt with in various ways in order to ensure that the programming continued to be of a high calibre. One of the cuts even resulted in RCI moving out of La Maison de Radio-Canada and into a smaller building a block away.

With the Canadian economy in recession late in the decade, the Government in Ottawa was forced to make sweeping reductions in all of its departments. By 1990, there were some who believed that international broadcasting was a luxury that Canada could no longer afford. A debate began over whether RCI should be retained but in a reduced form, or disbanded altogether. This debate quickly became known to the thousands of listeners who tune into RCI daily. It was clear they were very concerned that their lifeline to Canada could possibly be silenced. An informal letter writing campaign began with listeners writing to the Prime Minister, the Minister for External Affairs, and the Minister of Communications. Hundreds of letters were received in Ottawa. The campaign may have helped influence the final decision.

Shortly before the end of the year, the Government announced that Radio Canada International would be allowed to continue operations. To ensure this, it wrote a provision into Canada's new Communications Act that required Canada to always maintain an international broadcasting service. RCI had been saved, for the moment. But while the Communications Act mandated an international broadcasting service, it was silent on the issue of how that service would be funded. It wasn't very long before the funding issue came to the forefront.

In early 1991, facing further budget deficits, the Government ordered an across-the-board budget cut. Every ministry and Crown Corporation, including the CBC, was required to participate. After evaluating its budget, the CBC decided it could no longer pay for Radio Canada International without extra funding from Ottawa. After a month's study, the Government decided to place RCI under the umbrella of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and to fund the service with a separate annual grant for a period of five years. RCI would continue to be administered by the CBC.

Although the funding issue was now settled, the amount of the funding was significantly less than previous grants. To save the service, RCI Executive Director Allan Familant announced a major restructuring that took effect on March 25, 1991. Six of the 13 languages — Czech, German, Hungarian, Japanese, Polish, and Portuguese — were discontinued. And while the English and French services survived, all RCI-produced programming, except for news broadcasts, was eliminated and replaced with CBC Domestic network programs. Gone from the air were programs such as *Innovation Canada*, *SWL Digest*, *Listeners Corner*, and *Le coin des Auditeurs*. Several RCI staff members left the service including long-time producer/broadcaster Ian McFarland who went to Radio Japan. It was certainly a sobering day for Canada's international voice.



Jim Craig, host of Spectrum



The Radio Canada International Newsroom in 1990

## THE PHOENIX RISES 1991-1995

After the March, 1991 staff and program reductions, Radio Canada International moved to maintain what was left and plan for the future, hoping that one day the service could resume its full operations. And, over the past several years, some of the reductions have actually been reversed.

Right from the start, RCI was able to maintain its production facilities intact. This was fortunate in that it allowed RCI to continue operating a facility that would be needed in the event the service was ever able to restore a full program schedule. An important step towards that goal occurred in August, 1991 when RCI was able to resume production of two of its former programs, *Spectrum* and *Les Actualités Canadiennes*. Broadcast weekdays to Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, both programs focused on events and opinions from across Canada.

A year later, the English service was able to add two additional RCI produced programs, Arts Canada and Innovation Canada. And, on March 28, 1993, a full schedule of RCI produced English and French programs returned to the air including *The Mailbag* and *Earth Watch* in English and *Le Courrier des Auditeurs* and *Science et Environnement* in French. To complement these programs, RCI continued to broadcast selected CBC Domestic shows such as *As It Happens* and *Hebdo Radio*.

In 1992, Radio Canada International assumed responsibility for producing programs for the Canadian Forces Network after the CFN studios in Lahr, Germany closed. CFN Radio provides thousands of Canadian military men and women with news and entertainment from home. Initially, all of the programs were broadcast over CFN local stations around the world. In 1993, a special CFN *Report to Peacekeepers* show in English and French was added to RCI's shortwave schedule to Europe, Africa and the Middle East. By 1994, a second Peacekeepers show was being transmitted to the Caribbean and Latin America.

On the technical front, RCI continued to conclude transmitter exchange agreements with such international broadcasters as Radio Austria International (Moosbrunn), Deutsche Welle (Wertachtal, Germany), Radio Beijing (Xian, China), Radio Korea (Kimjae), and Radio Monte Carlo (Cape Greco, Cyprus). In addition, RCI's relay facility at Daventry, Great Britain was moved to Skelton in early 1992.

## SHORTWAVE AND MORE

While RCI has best been known as the Voice of Canada on shortwave, the Service has always been involved with other projects designed to showcase Canadian artists. For example, concurrent with the launching of its shortwave service, the CBC International Service created a Music Transcription Department to, perhaps for the first time, export Canadian music and musicians to radio stations around the world. The first of more than a thousand recordings, containing the "*Suite canadienne*" by Claude Champagne and the "*Concerto in C Minor*" by Healy Willan, was produced on 78 rpm records in 1945. Glenn Gould, Oscar Peterson, André Laplante, Louis Lortie and many more have recorded, some for the first time, for RCI.

One of RCI's Centennial Year projects in 1967 was to make 17 of its albums available on RCA's Red Seal Label under the title *Music and Musicians of Canada*. Another major endeavour was the 40-volume *Anthology of Canadian Music* a definitive collection of the works of major Canadian composers, much of it drawn from RCI's archives. The Anthology earned RCI the Canadian Music Council's *Firm of the Year Award* in 1981.

In addition to music, RCI early on began to distribute spoken-word programming in most of its broadcast languages, ranging from short, topical reports to full-length documentaries, to radio stations and cultural institutions around the world. Having played a pioneering role in the international achievements of Canadian music and musicians, RCI continues to provide music, information and educational programs to radio stations in almost 80 countries.

As previously mentioned, a significant initiative in 1988 was the creation of *Everyday English*, a series of English language lessons in Mandarin which achieved great success when broadcast on local radio stations in China. Three new Mandarin editions followed, and *Everyday English* is now on the air on domestic stations and networks in more than 25 countries around the world in Russian, Ukrainian, Spanish, African languages spoken in Namibia, South-East Africa, Vietnamese, Laotian and Khmère language versions.



**RCI**



## **SURVIVAL AND REBIRTH 1995-Present**

As RCI celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1995, there was a great deal of uncertainty about the future of the service. There were positive developments such as the Transport and Communications Committee of the Canadian Senate recommending to the Government that RCI be expanded and returned to full funding. In addition, the Joint Commons-Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs also suggested that RCI's role in promoting Canada be expanded.

But, in December, 1995, the whole picture changed when the CBC announced that there was no more money to keep RCI alive. Unless a new source of funds could be found, Radio Canada International would cease operations on March 31, 1996.

As of this writing, a world-wide effort to save RCI appears to have been successful. A coalition of staff, friends and listeners banded together to ensure that alternate funding was found to keep RCI broadcasting past the termination date. Thousands of letters were delivered to the Prime Minister's office as well as other Cabinet members. There was universal support from Canada's domestic broadcasters, public and private, as well as from the print media.

The campaign to save RCI reached a critical milestone recently when Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps indicated that Canada's voice to the world "must not die." Funds will be found to keep RCI on the air in 1996 while a permanent solution to the budget question is found.

As it completes 50 years of service, Radio Canada International continues to project a positive image of Canada to the world and to link Canadians abroad with the country, those who travel and those who serve in the Canadian military and peacekeeping functions. This is the role RCI has been fulfilling for over five decades. And, with the proper support, RCI will remain the definitive voice for the people of Canada as the world moves towards the 21st century.



**Radio Canada International  
P.O. Box/Case postale 6000  
Montréal, Canada  
H3C 3A8**

**This booklet was written  
and produced for  
Radio Canada International  
by Andrew K. Finnie**