

CANADA, A POWER VACUUM OF WORLD POLITICS

(A Study in Canadian Defence)

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TO-DAY, Canada, a small but potentially great nation, stands at the crossroads of the world's air routes. In such a strategic position it will undoubtedly develop a "Junction-Mentality" in regard to contemporary world affairs. These post-war years find the Canadian people justly looking to the future with the hope that air power will be a revolutionizing force in the development of Canada and its resources. However, economic development can be safeguarded only by strategic security. Strategically a junction location is an embarrassment to a weak nation, if at the same time it is an asset to a powerful one. Strategically, a weak Canada is in a very precarious position. Air connections, which are such an opportunity in peace, would be a liability in war.

In the light of present circumstances, this suggestion entails a very slight degree of probability and a very high degree of possibility. Nevertheless, a misunderstanding in Washington, London, Moscow, Paris, or Nanking could cause such a violent shift in the balance of power that the effects would all too readily be felt in Canada. It is therefore our duty as Canadian citizens to review Canada's Defence Policy, purely from the standpoint of defence. To maintain, individually or collectively, an "Ostrich Defence Policy", simply to appease our neighbors, is, to say the least, a betrayal of the best interests of Canada.

The Hon. Brooke Claxton, Minister of National Defence, has recently seen fit to reduce drastically our Armed Services to two Naval Fleets, five Army Commands, and two Air Force Commands, a mere shadow of their former might. To the current observer on world affairs, this act must tower above all others as a fine example of a nation sincerely striving for peace by making a tangible effort at disarmament, but it must be realized that "peace is not merely the absence of war. To endure it must be based on universal security . . ." ¹ Canada should play its part in maintaining this universal security by remaining strong and prepared.

In a period of transition from the Age of Coal and Iron to that of Oil and Uranium, we find Canada becoming the most recent power vacuum of world politics. Economic geologists, and perhaps militarists, must look somewhat longingly at the

1. C.C.F. Manifesto, 7th Annual Conference, 1942.

potential wealth of our Canadian Shield. Mr. W. E. Pratt, an outstanding geologist and a Vice-President of Standard Oil of New Jersey, said:

Well-considered estimates place the volume of the oil-equivalent of the Athabaska tar sands at from 100 to 250 billion barrels . . . there is little doubt that as a source of oil they could be exploited commercially to-day; eventually they may well come to be looked upon as one of the most important energy sources of North America.²

It is difficult to estimate Canada's share of the world's uranium, but it is more than possible that the deposits of our northland constitute the major source of supply of the English-speaking world powers of to-day. It is therefore quite logical to submit that Canada has, within her territorial boundaries, the mainstays of future Anglo-American atomic development. Has Canada considered the consequences of its export of uranium? During World War II the people of Canada learned to regard the Canadian losses at Hong Kong not only as the result of an inadequate pre-war defence policy but as a failure of the Dominion Government to impose economic sanctions on the export of scrap-metal bound for Japan. What is it about world relationships to-day that permits Canada to dispose of some of its uranium without fear of similar repercussions?

Primarily, Canada cannot exist as an economic entity. It is dependent on foreign markets to dispose of its products, both mineral and agricultural. To develop its mineral resources it is greatly dependent on the U. S. A. for its "power products"—iron ore and coal. Further, to sell the products of its western prairies, Canada must deal with a nation that is compelled to import the greater percentage of its food products; she found such a nation in Britain. Therefore, economically, Canada is inextricably tied to both of these English-speaking world powers. It would be economically as well as strategically embarrassing for Britain or the U. S. A. to see Canada threatened territorially or economically. Undoubtedly there are many Canadians to-day who feel that Canada should carry on greater economic activity with the U.S.S.R. than it has in the past. On what grounds could such economic activity be based? The U.S.S.R. and Canada are essentially the same type of country endowed with similar climates, similar shield areas with the same mineral products, and similar agricultural possibilities. However, the U.S.S.R. has adequate coal and iron resources, even though

2. Lewis and Scott, *Make This Your Canada*, p. 157.

widely dispersed, within its territorial boundaries, as well as a population capable of consuming the greater percentage of its agricultural products. It is therefore not compelled to seek lasting economic ties. On analysis it becomes evident that a very limited basis for trade exists between the U.S.S.R. and Canada. Canada has least to gain by maintaining trade with the U.S.S.R. and the most to gain by maintaining America's and Britain's trade. On the other hand, Canada has least to lose by losing U.S.S.R.'s trade and most to lose by losing America's and Britain's trade.

If Canada, as a link between Britain and the U. S. A., is weak, its vulnerability will soon be recognized by their enemies, and it will effectively stand as a power vacuum inviting attack and the resultant intervention by the world powers concerned. In view of this, can the U.S.A. and Britain afford to let Canada develop her resources alone? For the present time they can, but in the event of foreign interference it would be to their advantage to intervene first.

In what sense is Canada a power vacuum? Not in the same sense as Palestine and Iran, where nations rose to be world powers and then slumped into a decline creating a vacuumatic effect between the nations and the powers surrounding them. Canada is a nation making astounding progress. But its rate of progress is less than that of the nations surrounding it. Thus the same vacuumatic effect is achieved. Strategically Canada exists as a buffer state between the U. S. A. and the U.S.S.R. and would readily be implicated if a serious quarrel were to arise between these two powers. Thus Canada is a power vacuum in a strategic, as well as an economic, sense.

With this glimpse at the possibilities that a weak Canada could precipitate, it would be enlightening to review Canada's military problems, past and present, to attempt to see where we are going.

Viewed in the light of present circumstances, C. P. Stacey's statement, in 1940, that there are only three major frontiers is fundamentally in error. According to him, Canada's problem of defence is "dominated by three great topographical facts two natural and one created by man: two oceans and long land boundary.³ This statement was quite justifiable at the time but to-day it would be inconceivable to neglect Canada's fourth boundary—the Arctic Ocean.

Examination of the course of military history in Canada, as a British domain, reveals four distinct periods. Within

3. C. P. Stacey, *The Military Problems of Canada*, p. 1.

each of these periods it would be well to study the defences, actual or proposed, along each of Canada's four borders.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD OF CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY. (1759-1867)

(a) *Pacific Defence*—The insurmountable barrier of the Rocky Mountains stood between the colonies of the east and the warm Pacific coast. The few fishing villages and lumbering camps dotting the west coast region were endangered by no one, with the friendly British Fleet cruising offshore.

(b) *Arctic Defence*—The forbidding ice and cold of our northland acted as sufficient defence against any would-be invader.

(c) *Atlantic Defence*—A friendly British Navy controlled the Atlantic Ocean and thereby provided adequate defence against a landing on our east coast.

(d) *American Border Defence*—In the years immediately following the American Revolution, the problem of Canadian Defence was, more or less, limited to the Canadian-American border lying along the line of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence valley. When America attacked our country in the War of 1812, their militarists failed to analyze strategically the frontier and thereby passed up the opportunity of early victory. They overlooked the vulnerability of our water-link supply line at Montreal which connected Upper and Lower Canada via the Great Lakes; by capturing this point early in the war they would have succeeded in splitting Canada in half, over-running Upper Canada and concentrating their forces against Lower Canada. That the British, on the other hand, were aware of this possibility is shown in the immediate post-war years, when they spent £1,000,000 to build the Ottawa-Rideau canal, a less vulnerable route to Upper Canada.⁴

During this entire period, Canada was defended by British Regulars, some of whom were recruited in Canada. The internal strife and militaristic rebellions that occurred during this period do not fall within the scope of this article.

THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF CANADIAN MILITARY HISTORY. (1867-1918)

(a) *Pacific Defence*—During this period, our Pacific approaches were still admirably defended by the topography of the west coast, while a friendly British Navy, based at Esqui-

4. C. P. Stacey as 3 above, p. 3.

malt, adequately handled the "Russian Scare" of 1877-1885. Later, in 1911, Esquimalt formally became a Canadian naval base.

(b) *Arctic Defence*—No serious consideration was given to defence measures on the Arctic coast although it should be noted that during this period America purchased the Alaskan outpost.

(c) *Atlantic Defence*—The Atlantic was, during the early part of the period, controlled by a friendly British Navy and an indifferent American merchant fleet. In 1910, Halifax, Britain's foremost operational naval base on our Atlantic coast, was formally handed over to the Canadian Navy, which then took a minor but effective part in protecting our eastern approaches.

During World War I extensive shore batteries were established to counter any possible naval bombardment or landings on this coast.

(d) *American Border Defence*—During this entire period the railway carried the nation westward. Railway lines converged on Winnipeg to form a very strategic node approximately 70 miles from the American border.⁵ However, no defences were found along the Canadian-American border during the entire period, but loose talk of annexing Canada was still prevalent amongst Americans up to 1911.⁶

Shortly after Confederation, in 1871, the British Regulars were withdrawn from Canada and a Canadian Militia was established under a British C-in-C. Gradually the British officers of this Militia were replaced by Canadian graduates of the Royal Military college, founded at Kingston, Ontario, in 1874. In 1905, Lord Dundonald resigned as British C-in-C of the Canadian Militia, and a Canadian Cabinet Minister took over the administration of the Militia with the assistance of an Army Advisory Council.⁷

Twice during this period the Canadian Government saw fit to send Canadian troops overseas to engage in wars where more than the defence of Canada was at stake; they were in defence of the Empire.

NATIONAL PERIOD OF MILITARY HISTORY. (1918-1945)

(a) *Pacific Defence*—The Canadian Navy, small though it was, cruised the waters of the vulnerable area of the Pacific Coast—Vancouver Defences such as shore batteries were built and improved; submarine bases were established; air bases

5. C. P. Stacey as 3 above, p. 5.

6. Glazebrook, *Canadian External Relations to 1914*, 1942.

7. H. McD. Clokie, *Canadian Government and Politics*, 1944, p. 187.

were operated at Vancouver and Patricia Bay. For the first time in Canadian history Canada had occasion to war against a Pacific Power and therefore found it necessary to defend adequately the west coast against adverse fortunes of war. With the exception of the last decade, this period in Canadian military history was one of retrenchment, as so often voiced by Prime Minister Mackenzie King: "If we are ever to have retrenchment in military and naval expenditures this is the one moment in which it is possible to bring about something of that character."⁸

(b) *Arctic Defence*—Early in the period, the U.S.S.R. was not considered a threat to Canada, possibly because it was badly divided within its own borders. As a result Canada did little more than to establish a few meteorological stations in the Arctic regions. When the U.S.S.R. became our ally in World War II, the Arctic was known as "the friendly north" with Russo-Canadian trans-polar flights, a common occurrence. No defence measures were necessary with Russian fliers as common on the streets of Edmonton as they were in Moscow.

(c) *Atlantic Defence*—It was not until the "New Defence Policy" was laid down in 1935 by the Minister of National Defence, Hon. Ian Mackenzie, that many changes in Atlantic defences were made. The progress made during this period was tremendous when compared to other periods, but, viewed in the light of the war that followed, it was actually nothing more than a token gesture. The last decade of the period saw the war with Germany and Japan tax Canada's resources as they had never been taxed before; saw the mobilization and extension of Canada's three services; saw the introduction of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan; saw the peoples of Hong Kong, Dieppe, Otrorno, Caen, and the Scheldt honour the Canadian soldiers who died there fighting to preserve universal liberty. The Canadian and British fleets, at times severely crippled, stood undaunted in the defence of our Atlantic coast.

(d) *American Border Defence*—Never at a time in Canadian and American history had mutual friendship been so strong. The dividing line between the two countries changed from the European phraseology of "frontier" to the North American phraseology of "boundary". Envied indeed is the 3000 miles of undefended border between Canada and America. Those American air bases that were established near this border in

1935 were for the protection of the U. S. A. from what might come over or through Canada rather than from what might come from Canada itself.⁹

INTERNATIONAL PERIOD OF MILITARY HISTORY:
(FROM 1945 TO DATE)

(a) *Pacific Defence*—In viewing the situation to-day it is necessary to consider the approaches to the Canadian borders. In the west we find the Rocky Mountain Barrier running parallel to the coast with three possible passageways through it (i) the Fraser River Valley, (ii) the Skeena River Valley, and (iii) the Bella Coola River Valley.¹⁰ The coastal centre of population at Vancouver is defended by shore batteries on Vancouver Island and by the Canadian naval vessels that patrol the waters off the coast. The entire area is covered by a series of Air Force Stations, along the "northwest staging route". A friendly American Navy completely dominates the Pacific waters from Canada to Asia.

(b) *Arctic Defence*—With the close of World War II, the Canadian Government quickly surveyed the new balance of power and the relationship between Canada and the world powers. To the south it found a friendly America, to the east a motherly Britain, to the west a struggling China and a broken Japan, and to the north a Russian ally. Eyes turned northward. Expedition "Muskox" was the first official attempt of the Canadian Government to determine the suitability of Canada's Armed Forces to carry on Arctic manoeuvres. In February of 1947, Prime Minister Mackenzie King completed an agreement with General Marshal, Foreign Secretary of the U. S. A., to promote Canadian-American research and development of the Arctic regions. As V. Stefansson so aptly said, "the problems of the north have never been understood, for they are not of the past but of the future."¹¹

(c) *Atlantic Defence*—The Canadian, British and American Navies stand guard off our eastern coast. They work in conjunction with a complicated network of air bases, somewhat under-manned, and with Army posts strategically located throughout the east-coast region.

[The possibility of a naval attack on this coast is very slight for a number of reasons: (i) the distances that large convoys would have to travel as well as their final rendezvous near the

9. C. P. Stacey as 3 above, p. 31.

10. C. P. Stacey as 3 above, p. 23.

11. Reprint V. Stefansson's "Northward the Course of Empire," *Readers' Digest*, (February, 1947).

North American coast, would be too risky. (ii) The number of supply ships required would make the whole affair a cumbersome thing. (iii) Short range fighter defence of the coast could harass, if not ward off, any approaching enemy.¹²

From this brief survey of Canada's military situation it may be possible to draw certain definite conclusions. It is quite evident that Canada is no longer an immature daughter nation of Britain, but at the same time it is obvious that it is not a world power. What then is Canada's role in world politics? With the rise and the flourishing of the American Motion Picture Industry, the U. S. A., whether wilfully or otherwise, made itself an indispensable friend of the majority of Canadian individuals. America effectively educated Canadians to think in the "American Pattern," through its motion pictures. The depression years in Canada were coloured with admiration for the national figure of the U. S. A. and his "New Deal". The late Franklin Delano Roosevelt was admired even more when he pledged American support "if domination of Canadian soil was threatened". Later, in the Ogdensburg Agreement, Canada and the U. S. A. joined hands to open a trend towards hemispherical defence. As a result of the work of the Joint Defence Board considerable progress has been made towards establishing a secure North America. Thus Canada is effectively playing the role of a younger sister of the U. S. A. The English-speaking nations of the northern hemisphere stand to-day as the "North American Triangle". Consider the location of Canadian and American heavy industry. The Canadian "Power Triangle" lies between the cities of Winnipeg, Montreal and Windsor, whereas the American "Power Triangle" lies between the cities of Duluth, New York and Oak Ridge. The proximity of these "Power Triangles" with little or no geographical obstructions between them invites the exchange of production methods, etc.; such exchange always leads to greater unity between two nations. It becomes evident that American and British friendship are necessary complements of Canadian defence measures. If such a conclusion is to be drawn, then it would be wise to reconsider the entire problem of Canadian defence.

To the south we find our chief ally, in peace and war, the U. S. A. Together we stand to defend the western hemisphere by land, sea and air. An incidental fact that vindicates our faith in the integrity of the U. S. A. is the location of all our Military Headquarters along or near the American border: Esquimaux, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Oakville, Trenton, Quebec

12. C. P. Stacey as 3 above, pp. 9-14.

City and Halifax. As a result of this, it is possible to see that none of Canada's defence plans are directed southward; thus the famous Canadian-American border remains essentially undefended.

To the east we find the previously mentioned "North American Triangle" with air bases established in Goose Bay, Labrador and Gander Bay, Newfoundland, and a relative "option" on further strategic air bases in Greenland and Iceland should the need arise. These two established bases act as effective outposts looking towards all the important conurbations with over a million inhabitants of Europe and Asia.¹³

To the west we find that the broad Pacific Ocean, patrolled by the Canadian and American Navies, is dotted with American controlled islands strategically chosen as outposts in the U. S. A. defence scheme of North America.

Thus with the great U-shaped defence pattern that our ally, the U. S. A., has placed around us in the ultimate defence of its own territory, Canada is left free to turn its attention northward—to concentrate on its Arctic defences. At the present time, adequate air coverage of northeast Canada is effectively maintained by aircraft based at Goose Bay, (Labrador). A very fundamental difference exists between the defence of northeast Canada and of northwest Canada. Goose Bay is not connected directly to the American and Canadian Heartland by adequate military road or rail. It effectively stands as an "air-outpost" in North American Defence.

Whereas in the defence scheme for northwestern Canada, the air bases from Edmonton to Alaska lie along the Alcan Highway and are in fact linked by land as well as air for the movement of heavy supplies. The extension of this route leads to the important east coast regions of Asia.¹⁴ Thus the inland defences of North America consist of a series of air bases lying in a broad V-formation, the arms of which extend from the industrial and agricultural Heartland to Nome, Alaska, through Edmonton in the northwest and to Reykjavik through Goose Bay and Greenland in the northeast.

There seems to be little public knowledge of extensive defence establishments in north central Canada. However, in the event that bases are found necessary in this area, the experimental station at Churchill, Manitoba, could readily be converted into another operational air base to meet the requirements of the situation. If any definite conclusion is to be drawn from this study then it might be this: more or less ade-

13. E. G. R. Taylor, *Geography of an Air Age*, 1945, pp. 28-29, Fig. 5.

14. E. G. R. Taylor as (13) above, pp. 28-29, Fig. 4.

quate defence of northwestern and northeastern Canada is assured through our continued co-operation with the U. S. A. These areas strategically guard North America from peripheral Eurasia, but little or no concrete defence measures protect north central America from central Eurasia. Such is the problem that faces the Canadian-American Joint Defence Board to-day.