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THE CANADIAN ARMY AND THE DEFENCE OF NEWFOUNDLAND IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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by

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ABSTRACT

In 1934, with the virtual collapse of its economy, Newfoundland surrendered representative and responsible government to a commission appointed by the government of the United Kingdom. At the same time technology such as the airplane was increasing Newfoundland's strategic worth and making its security an important factor in the defence of North America. Yet, on the eve of World War II Newfoundland had no local defence forces and depended for protection on the distant and overextended resources of Britain's Royal Navy.

When the international situation deteriorated during the late 1930s Canada became concerned about Newfoundland's military weakness but was reluctant to become involved in the colony's defence. With the fall of France in 1940 Canada's relationship with Newfoundland underwent a fundamental shift. Changing strategic considerations and the country's own defence requirements led directly to Canadian intervention. The despatch of military and air force units to secure Newfoundland's vital airfields represented the first stage of an extended commitment to the island's defence.

A greater extension of Canadian control over Newfoundland's defence came with the establishment of W Force. Comprised of elements of Canada's expanded wartime army, W Force was assigned responsibility for defending the island against enemy incursions and providing security for existing and proposed defence facilities.

The American decision to station troops in Newfoundland in 1940 posed a threat to Canada's pre-eminent role in the island's defence. The Canadian response was to hedge American command responsibility, to increase the Canadian commitment and to integrate Newfoundland into the Canadian defence orbit.

Newfoundland became less important to North American defence as the war effort shifted towards Europe and the Allied invasion of German-occupied Europe. This led to a reduction of Canadian Active Service Force units in Newfoundland and their replacement with personnel conscripted under the National Resources Mobilization Act, a situation that continued until the end of the war.

Since the last decade of the nineteenth century Canada and Newfoundland had come closer together socially, culturally and commercially. World War II now brought them together strategically and militarily. The interaction between Canadians and Newfoundlanders was for the most part amicable and ultimately beneficial for both. For Canada it had been a costly but necessary investment, given the tenor

of the times. Tens of millions had been poured into the Newfoundland economy creating thousands of jobs and an infrastructure that lasted beyond the war. Canadian undertakings in Newfoundland were, however, based on sound military practice and research for this paper found no evidence that Canada's activities were motivated by anything other than wartime exigencies.

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PREFACE

The fact that the Canadian Army took the main responsibility for the physical defence of Newfoundland during World War II has never been given the full recognition it deserves. Economic and political historians like David Mackenzie, Inside the Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Entrance of Newfoundland into Confederation (Toronto: 1986) and Peter Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World 1929-1949 (Kingston: 1988), while helpful, deal almost exclusively with the financial and administrative arrangements of Canada's (and the United States') involvement in the defence of Newfoundland in World War II. On the other hand military historians like C.P. Stacey, Arms Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939 - 1945 (Ottawa: 1970) and Stanley W. Dziuban, Military Relations between the United States and Canada 1939 - 1945 (Washington D.C.: 1957) have dealt with Canada's and the United States' role in Newfoundland's defence only in general terms, content to confine themselves to policy rather than offering an explanation of how the undertaking was carried out. This paper corrects this oversight by describing the crucial part played by W Force and how it was organized, manned, equipped and deployed to carry out its task.

From the outset it was apparent that the topic could not be adequately addressed without first describing Newfoundland's and Canada's pre-war positions in the North Atlantic Triangle. This discussion is included here mainly in the way of background and since it has been dealt with exhaustively in many recent histories, such as those cited above, the author has relied almost exclusively on secondary sources.

For the opening phase of the war as the Canadian Army expanded and began the monumental task of reorganizing itself to defend Canada and take on overseas commitments the official histories, such as C.P. Stacey, The Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War Volume I, Six Years of War (Ottawa: 1957) and G.W.L. Nicholson, The Gunners of Canada: The History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, Volume II 1919 - 1967 (Toronto: 1972), still proved to be the best sources.

From the arrival of the Canadian Army in Newfoundland in June 1940 until its departure in October 1945 primary sources were used almost exclusively. The main primary source was the National Defence Department's Records Group 24 contained in the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa. The War Diaries of Headquarters W Force (seven volumes) as well as the War Diaries of all the units that served in W Force (forty-seven

volumes) were consulted. These War Diaries provided a continuous record of events in Newfoundland throughout the period. No significant gaps were found in these records and little difficulty was encountered in reconstructing the events from June 1940 to October 1945. In spite of wartime censorship The Daily News and The Evening Telegram were beneficial in providing a local perspective of the Canadian Army while the Ottawa Citizen provided a Canadian view. For day-to-day activities and personal experiences and attitudes the regimental histories of units stationed in Newfoundland such as G.L. Cassidy, Warpath: The Story of the Algonquin Regiment 1939 - 1945 (Toronto: 1948) and Geoffrey Hayes The Lincs: A History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at War (Alma: 1986), provided a detailed record and as well offered some interesting insights. Finally an indispensable source for Canadian policy regarding Newfoundland is the collection of reproduced government documents edited by Paul Bridle, Documents on Relations between Canada and Newfoundland 1935 - 1949 Volume I Defence, Civil Aviation and Economic Affairs (Ottawa: 1974)

The author is grateful to the many people who gave this work critical reading and constructive advice. Deserving of special thanks are: Dr. David Facey-Crowther, my original supervisor, for his encouragement and guidance over a period of several years, Dr. Malcolm MacLeod, for his assistance and

advice early on and a special debt is owed to Dr. Olaf Janzen, my second supervisor, who helped me redefine and polish the manuscript.

INTRODUCTION

Standing at the threshold of the New World Newfoundland still cast a lingering glance at the old. Whenever an enemy appeared to threaten any part of the Empire it was ready to take up arms and then, when the danger had passed, resume its station as a remote and seemingly unimportant island in the North Atlantic, secure behind the protecting shield of the Royal Navy. This was the course followed in the Great War. By the 1930s, however, Newfoundland's remoteness was being lessened by fast developing technology such as the airplane which, at the same time, greatly enhanced its strategic worth. This only helped to underscore its vulnerability since Great Britain, on whom it depended for its defence, had neither military establishments nor naval facilities on the island.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S BACKGROUND

Europeans first arrived in Newfoundland a millennium ago when Norse explorers visited and for a time settled on the tip of the Great Northern Peninsula. Sustained European interest in Newfoundland began only after John Cabot rediscovered the island in 1497. Although the English laid claim to the island

by right of Cabot's discovery, it was the Portuguese, Spanish, Basques and French who first established the island as a base for a seasonal international fishery. Nevertheless, in 1713, Great Britain was granted sovereignty over the island by the Treaty of Utrecht and thereafter dominated the area.

The island portion comprises an area of 42,000 square miles.[1] In 1927, after much political and legal wrangling and considerable acrimony between Newfoundland and Canada the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council confirmed Newfoundland's ownership of Labrador. This added another 110,000 square miles to the Dominion.[2] Geologically it is Appalachian but it is much more rugged than the Appalachian region of the mainland. In the period of glaciation its highlands were scraped bare of soil and its valleys clogged with infertile glacial drift. In consequence more than seventy-five per cent of the total area is agriculturally unredeemable. Even where the soil is tillable the short growing season and almost constant threat of frost place

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[1]David MacKenzie, Inside the Atlantic Triangle: Canada and the Entrance of Newfoundland Into Confederation, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) p.3.

[2] C.J. Frother, "Canada·s Tenth Province?" in Canadian Business (February 1941) p.85. See also Peter Neary, Newfoundland in the North Atlantic World 1929-1949 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988) p.8.

severe limits on production.[3] In fact, even in the 1930s, Newfoundland's environmental realities would defeat the determined efforts of the Newfoundland government to promote agricultural settlement as a way of solving the social and economic crisis of the Great Depression.[4]

The 6,000 miles of shoreline corresponds to the general topography; it is rough and barren, bordered in turn by flats and cliffs and dotted with countless reefs and islands.[5] Although there are many bays and inlets which offer safe inshore anchorage, good harbours are relatively rare since more often than not "they are too small, too foggy, too shallow, too open, too liable to freeze in winter or be filled with northern pack ice for long periods in the spring."[6]

Newfoundland has often justifiably been maligned on account of its climate. In fact, Newfoundland's climate is

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[3]Malcom H. Clark, "Outpost No.1: Newfoundland" in Harpers Magazine, (Vol CLXXXII February 1941) p.249.

[4]W.Gordon Handcock, "The Commission of Government's Land Settlement Scheme in Newfoundland" in James K. Hiller and Peter Neary (eds.), Twentieth Century Newfoundland: Explorations, (St. John's: Breakwater, 1994) pp. 123-151.

[5]R.A. MacKay, Newfoundland: Economic, Diplomatic and Strategic Studies, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1946) p.486.

[6]A.R.M. Lower, "Newfoundland in North American Strategy" in Foreign Affairs (Vol XX July 1942) p.767.

comparable to that of Southern Alaska. Because of the virtual encirclement of the island by the cold water of the Labrador Current the sea exerts a dominating influence on the climate, moderating both summer and winter temperatures.[7] Perhaps the most serious climatic handicap is the descent of pack ice from the north which normally reaches its greatest extent in April and delays the arrival of spring.[8]

In 1817 London appointed a full-time governor but Newfoundland's status as a colony was not fully established until 1825.[9] In 1832 a legislature similar to that of Nova Scotia was established.[10] Then in 1855, Responsible Government, again on the lines recognized seven years earlier in Nova Scotia, was granted.[11] Nevertheless Newfoundland's political and constitutional evolution did not parallel that of the rest of British North America; Newfoundland's unique geographical and political situation resulted in a different

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[7]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, p.3.

[8]Lower, "Newfoundland", p.787.

[9]St. John Chadwick, Newfoundland: Island into Province (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967) p.13.

[10]Gregory Goldwin, "Newfoundland is all North America's Problem" in Saturday Night, (November 30, 1940) p.7. See also Neary, North Atlantic World, p.6.

[11]Neary, North Atlantic World, p.4.

sort of development.[12]

When the Fathers of Confederation met in Quebec in 1864 Newfoundland was represented as a prospective province. The people of Newfoundland, however, had limited political, social and cultural, or even commercial affinity with the other British colonies of North America and so the proffered terms were rejected.[13] A bank crash in 1894 resulted in financial collapse and social distress in the country and led Newfoundland to reopen negotiations for entrance into Confederation. Canada, however, set such unsatisfactory terms for its entry that, although in grievous distress, Newfoundland could not accept.[14] This left a legacy of bitterness on both sides and solidified a deep resentment towards Canada on the part of some Newfoundlanders.[15]

The rejection of confederation notwithstanding there were numerous bonds between the two countries. Canadian banks rapidly took advantage of the economic hiatus. They initiated Newfoundland operations bringing their Canadian currency with

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[12]Mackenzie, Atlantic Triangle, pp.7-8.

[13]Goldwin, North America's Problem, p.7. See also Neary, North Atlantic World, p.6.

[14]Ibid.

[15]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, p.10.

them. In fact, in 1895 the two currencies were made equal by law. Canadian banks soon dominated the island's economy and were followed by other commercial interests which became powerful in transportation and mining. Inescapably, social relationships followed. This included the interchange of people which led to significant links between churches, fraternal and service organizations. Mutual interests led the two governments to cooperate in several permanent arrangements for joint administrative action for such functions as the building and maintenance of lighthouses and sharing meterological services. Even in the field of education there were numerous official ties between the two countries. The result was a linking of shared experience which inevitably brought the two communities closer together.[16]

After World War I, as many of the Dominions sought greater autonomy from Great Britain, Newfoundland was curiously reluctant to follow their lead. The Dominions, with the exception of Newfoundland, signed the Paris Peace Agreements and opted for separate membership in the League of Nations. In the period 1919-1926, as the more assertive Dominion Governments sought to enhance their stature by

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[16]For a wider discussion of Canadian/Newfoundland links see Malcolm MacLeod, Kindred Countries: Newfoundland and Canada Before Confederation Historical Booklet No. 52 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1994)

participating in international relations, Newfoundland, although exercising some of the prerogatives of an independent Dominion, was content to leave international negotiations up to the British Government, taking direct part only when its particular and narrowly defined interests were at stake. Newfoundland participated in the drafting of the Balfour Declaration of 1926 which defined the positions and relations of Great Britain and the Dominions. This declaration of equality notwithstanding, Newfoundland's failure to seek membership in the League of Nations or to undertake direct and substantive international initiatives ensured that its position as a Dominion remained both ambiguous and confused.[17]

The economy of Newfoundland was essentially a colonial economy, that is to say, the dynamic factor in the economy was the production of staple products for export rather than a production of consumers' goods for the home market.[18] Economic returns from natural resources at any given moment depended solely upon the market. Newfoundland, exporting up to seventy-five per cent of what it produced, was dependent upon

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[17]William C. Gilmore, Newfoundland and Dominion Status, (Agincourt, Ontario: Carswell Co.Ltd., 1988) pp. 1-8.

[18]MacKay, Newfoundland, p.17.

world markets which its government was powerless to influence.[19] Yet, with an optimism which was hardly warranted by the economic limitations of the country, succeeding Newfoundland governments, particularly after World War I, substantially increased the public debt by borrowing abroad. When the storm of the Great Depression struck the world in 1930 Newfoundland suffered drastically.[20]

In the early stages of the Depression the Newfoundland Government attempted to alleviate the crisis in the traditional manner: by relief, public works and additional borrowing. These measures had no effect. It might have been possible to balance the budget by defaulting on the public debt but the government was unwilling to take that fateful step. By 1932 Newfoundland was unable to borrow any additional funds in world markets. Finally in 1933 with the economy in virtual collapse the Dominion asked the Government

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[19]Stanley Saunders and E. Black, "Newfoundland: Sentinel of the St. Lawrence" in Behind the Headlines (Vol III September 1943) p.3. See also Neary, North Atlantic World, pp. 10-11.

[20]Maxwell Cohen "Newfoundland in Transition" in Saturday Night (August 1, 1942) p.14., also, R.M. Elliott, "Newfoundland Politics in the 1920's: The Genesis and Significance of the Hollis Walker Enquiry" in James Hiller and Peter Neary, eds. Newfoundland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Essays in Interpretation (Toronto-Buffalo-London: 1980) pp. 181-204 provides an excellent exposé of Newfoundland politics in the decade leading up to the Great Depression. See also Neary, North Atlantic World, pp. 10-11.

of the United Kingdom to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate conditions and recommend a course of action to address the situation. From this inquiry emerged the celebrated Amulree Report.[21] In a scathing indictment the report attributed Newfoundland's plight to the venality of its past political leaders and to unsound practices in public administration and finance. While admittedly Newfoundland politics left much to be desired, the Commission measured Newfoundland's political leadership and administrative efficiency against the highly-developed structure of the United Kingdom. Given Newfoundland's unique historical circumstances and its tiny population spread over a large area severely lacking in communications the comparison was hardly fair. Among the Commission's recommendations the most important and far-reaching was that elected government be suspended until the emergency had passed. In 1934, therefore, representative and responsible government was surrendered and administrative and financial control was passed to a British-appointed Commission responsible to the Parliament of the United Kingdom through the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. It comprised a governor and six commissioners:

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[21]Great Britain. Newfoundland Royal Commission 1933. Report Presented to the Secretary of State for Domi.ion Affairs to Parliament by Command of His Majesty November 1933. (London: H.M.S.O., 1933)

three British and three Newfoundlanders.[22]

The aim of the Commission was to get the country back on a firm economic footing by balancing the budget while providing the basis for long-term economic planning and development.[23] With the help of grants-in-aid from Whitehall, the Commission implemented many administrative changes and attempted several important social and economic reforms; but on the eve of the Second World War Newfoundland was still mired economically.[24]

NEWFOUNDLAND'S PART IN IN WORLD WAR I

For nearly a hundred years after 1815, Newfoundland had lived an existence undisturbed by any thoughts of war. Since the War of 1812 no fighting had taken place near its shores. After the withdrawal of the Imperial garrison in 1870, soldiers and uniforms had become objects of curiosity. The only war-like instruments to be seen were a few old cannon, relics of half-forgotten struggles with the French during the

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[22]Peter Neary, "Great Britain and the Future of Newfoundland 1939-1945" in Newfoundland Studies (Vol.1, No.1, Spring 1985) p.29.

[23]Peter Neary, ed, The Political Economy of Newfoundland 1929-1972 (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishers, 1973) p.11.

[24]Neary, "Great Britain", p.29.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Only the occasional visit of a warship of the Royal Navy served to remind the islanders of the great force to which they owed their protection against possible foreign aggression. War appeared impossible, at least as far as Newfoundlanders were concerned, and even if it came, it was not expected to disturb greatly the tranquil habits of life of this small and remote community.[25]

Newfoundland, however, retained a strong sentimental attachment to Great Britain as the "Mother Country" and whenever an enemy appeared to threaten any part of the Empire the colony was always ready to take up arms.[26] Regiments of volunteers for army service had been raised periodically since the early eighteenth century while her seamen, known for their stamina and small boat handling skills, had served throughout the fleet from the earliest days of settlement.[27] At the same time the Royal Navy had controlled the Atlantic and interposed its tremendous power between Britain's North American

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[25]A. Lacey, "Newfoundland: The Watchdog of the St. Lawrence" in Canadian Geographical Journal (Vol. XXVII, January 1944) p.3.

[26]Saunders and Black, "Sentinel", p.11.

[27]C.P. Stacey, Military Problems of Canada: A Survey of Defence Problems and Strategic Conditions (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1940)p.17.

possessions and any possible enemy. Newfoundland had grown to nationhood in its shadow and "had come to accept it almost as a fact of geography."[28] The aim of British naval strategy was to contain a European enemy in home waters to prevent his escape westward, and if that occurred, to engage and defeat the enemy fleet in a single decisive battle as Nelson did at Trafalgar. This strategy proved successful for nearly a century after the Battle of Trafalgar.[29] But by the twentieth century technological changes and naval rivalry had gravely weakened the British hegemony of the North Atlantic.[30]

In the summer of 1914 Newfoundlanders paid little attention to the growing possibility of a European conflict. Nevertheless, on 4 August, as a loyal member of the Empire, Newfoundland found itself at war. Although few of its citizens could have even the slightest comprehension of what this meant, in an outpouring of patriotic fervour the Newfoundland government immediately placed the Newfoundland

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[28]Joseph Schull, The Far Distant Ships: An Official Account of Canadian Naval Operations in World War II (Toronto: Stoddard Publishing Co. Ltd., 1987) p.8.

[29]G.S. Graham, "Britain's Defence of Newfoundland: A Survey from Discovery to the Present Day" in Canadian Historical Review (Vol XXIII, September 1942) p.278.

[30]Paul Bridle, ed., Documents on Relations Between Canada and Newfoundland 1934-1949 Vol I (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974) p.XLVII

Royal Naval Reserve (NRNR) on active duty.[31]

At the end of the nineteenth century the Admiralty recognized the value of having available in Newfoundland a reserve of trained seamen prepared to augment the fleet when required. The initial intake of fifty fishermen enrolled in 1900 proved so successful that in 1902 HMS Calypso was sent to St. John's to be permanently stationed there as a training ship. The NRNR was an Imperial force, not a colonial or dominion one. This meant that all the officers and staff were of the Royal Navy and that the NRNR was administered by the Admiralty. Recruiting and training continued during the succeeding years with a pattern of training which was well suited to the seasonal occupations of the Newfoundlanders. Regulations provided for naval training to be carried out in warships during the autumn and winter since this would cause the minimum of interference with the men's normal employment in the fishery. In addition to their pay as naval ratings they received an annual retainer which bound them to report for service afloat when called upon. During World War I the unit proved its value since 1,964 members served throughout the fleet. By 1920, however, enrollees had been discharged and no further enrollments were made. The Newfoundland Royal

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[31]S.J.R. Noel, Politics in Newfoundland (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971) p.120.

Naval Reserve with its splendid war record and first rate tradition of service ceased to exist.[32]

At the same time as the Royal Naval Reserve mustered the Newfoundland Regiment was formed in St. John's and from there on 4 October, 1914, five hundred and thirty seven volunteers sailed for England. It was brought up to full strength in Scotland where it was designated the First Newfoundland Regiment. From Gallipoli to Flanders it fought with distinction and covered itself in glory in innumerable actions, winning scores of decorations, and producing the youngest VC in the Empire. Of particular note was the Battle of Beaumont Hamel, where, on July 1, 1916 the Regiment was committed in a futile and suicidal attack and was virtually annihilated, suffering 720 casualties in less than one hour. In February 1917 it was accorded the prefix "Royal", a singular mark of distinction since it was only the third British regiment in history and the only one in World War I to receive the award in war-time. Of the Regiment's total enlistment of 6,242 no less than twenty percent were killed. Upon the Regiment's return from overseas the Colours were laid up and like the many units from Newfoundland which, periodically since 1709, had served their sovereign in war, it

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[32]Hector Swain, History of the Naval Reserves in Newfoundland (St. John's: Provincial Archives, 1975) pp.1-5

too passed into history.[33]

World War I brought the first threat since Trafalgar to the security of all North America, Newfoundland included, because for the first time Great Britain's naval supremacy was contested. Of particular worry were enemy submarines for if they penetrated the Atlantic they could pose a serious challenge to the surface navy. Extremely alarmed at this prospect, Admiral George Patey, Commander-in-Chief of the American and West Indies Squadron of the Royal Navy informed the Admiralty that his "comparatively large and slow cruisers" were useless for anti-submarine warfare.[34] Newfoundland was similarly alarmed.

> The jugular vein of the Newfoundland economy was tonnage. Saltfish was transported to Europe and Caribbean markets, often by way of trans-shipment through Liverpool and New York; pulp and paper went to Great Britain; iron ore to Nova Scotia and the United States. Incoming carriers brought basic foodstuffs from Canada and the United States, molasses from the British West Indies, coal from North Sydney, salt from Spain, and from the

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[33]G.W.L. Nicholson, The Canadian Expeditionary Force: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War, (Ottawa: Queens Printer, 1962) pp.507-510.

[34]Roger Flynn Sarty, Silent Sentry: A Military and Political History of Canadian Coast Defence 1860-1945 (University of Toronto: Doctor of Philosophy Thesis, 1982) p.303.

> United Kingdom, dry goods and confectioneries. The colony also imported raw materials and machinery used for local manufacturing purposes. A total of twelve coastal and bay vessels provided the chief, and often only link, with the communities along the coast.[35]

Newfoundland's defence resources were extremely limited but on the advice of the Admiralty the Home Defence Committee put into place rudimentary anti-submarine measures. Detachments of the Newfoundland Regiment and Newfoundland Constabulary manned look-out positions along the coast of the island and Labrador and three vessels, only one of which was armed, patrolled inshore waters. Their task was to "watch the remote bays and inlets where U-boats might refuel with the help of local agents or a disguised mother-ship."[36] At St. John's guns were installed overlooking the entrance to the harbour.[37]

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[35]Patricia Ruth O'Brien, The Newfoundland Patriotic Association: The Administration of the War Effort 1914-1918 (Memorial University of Newfoundland: Master of Arts Thesis, 1982) p.228.

[36]Sarty, Silent Sentry, p.304.

[37]O'Brien, Patriotic Association, p.228. In fact, it was not until 1918 that German submarines penetrated as far west as the continental shelf of eastern North America. In that year one hundred commercial vessels of all types including thirty-five fishing vessels were sunk in North American coastal waters. [Charles Dana Gibson, "Victim or Participant? Allied Fishing Fleets and U-Boat Attacks in World Wars I and II" in The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord (Vol 1 No. 4 October 1991) pp. 2-5.] See also Michael L. Hadley and Roger Sarty, Tin Pots and Pirate Ships:

In 1916 Newfoundland reached an agreement with the Canadian Government whereby coastal patrols were coordinated under a central command based at Sydney.[38] A wireless communications system between the two countries was established so that information concerning enemy submarines collected by their respective patrol and coast-watching organizations might be quickly shared. Canada's anti-submarine patrol in the Gulf of St. Lawrence took responsibility for the south and west coasts of the island enabling Newfoundland to concentrate its efforts on the exposed north-east coast from Cape Race to Cape Chidley.[39] By 1917, however, lacking the means to provide effective forces against an increasing submarine threat Newfoundland dropped back its participation and relied on Canadian anti-submarine patrols for the protection of its coast.[40] By the end of World War I Great Britain had reemerged as mistress of the seas. With the German navy completely vanquished no other European rival could challenge her naval power. Newfoundland was able to resume its place as a remote and seemingly

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Canadian Naval Forces and German Sea Raiders 1880-1918 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991) Chapter 9, "Long Range U-Boats" pp. 207-232.

[38]O'Brien, Patriotic Association, pp.228-229.

[39]Sarty, Silent Sentry, p.305.

[40]O'Brien, Patriotic Association, p.232.

unimportant island in a safe and secure North Atlantic.[41] But the reliance upon Canada foreshadowed events in World War II when the island's strategic importance required similar cooperation.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

By the mid 1930s it was obvious to many that the collision course embarked upon by the European powers must eventually drift into war. Defence, however, remained a low priority for the Commission of Government. Faced with domestic crises of unemployment, poverty and economic stagnation that were almost insurmountable, the Commission had little time and fewer resources to spend on defence problems. Nor did defence seem something for which Newfoundland should take responsibility. Unlike the other Dominions, Newfoundland had never assumed responsibility for its own local defence; with the demise after the war of the Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, the civil constabulary became the only organized force on the Island.[42] With its tiny population and weak economy it was impossible for Newfoundland to maintain a separate defence establishment

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[41]MacKay, Newfoundland, p.6.

[42]Stacey, Military Problems, pp. 17-18.

without outside help. Yet, when the suspension of responsible government in 1934 placed liability for its defence directly on Great Britain, the Imperial government took no steps to provide either military establishments or naval facilities on the island. Newfoundland's defence continued to rest solely on the Royal Navy's control of the North Atlantic.[43]

Canada was also reluctant to enter into defence agreements respecting Newfoundland even though the international situation was deteriorating rapidly in the 1930s and despite the fact that Canada had several good reasons to be concerned with Newfoundland's defence.[44] For one thing the Bell Island mines were the source of iron ore for the Sydney smelters which represented thirty per cent of Canada's productive capacity in steel.[45] For another Newfoundland projected far out into the Atlantic and was closer to Europe than any other part of the Western Hemisphere. As a result the island was the linchpin in the trans-Atlantic communications system since no less than sixteen underwater

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[43]MacKay, Newfoundland, p.492.

[44]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, p.22.

[45]MacKay, Newfoundland, p.493.

cables terminated on its shores.[46] Most important, Newfoundland commanded the approaches to the St. Lawrence River and lay alongside the shipping lanes to Europe. No potential enemy could fail to note the immense advantage to be gained from its possession and in hostile hands it would pose a severe threat to the neighbouring mainland, limiting Canadian access to the sea by way of the Straits of Belle Isle and the Cabot Strait and threatening the approaches to Halifax and Saint John. In friendly hands, however, Newfoundland contributed to Canadian security. Since it would cover the St. Lawrence, naval forces based on the island would be in a position to protect the sea approaches and strike effectively at the flank of any enemy moving by sea against Halifax or Saint John.[47]

World War I showed that the old device of naval warfare, the convoy system, was the most effective protection against the submarine threat. In support of convoy operations the dockyard and oil storage facilities at the port of St. John's, long a minor British naval station, could prove invaluable. Although its harbour was too small to be used for collecting

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[46]G.W.L. Nicholson, "Our Fighting Forces in World War II" in Book of Newfoundland (St. John's: Newfoundland Book Publishers, 1967) p.497.

[47]Stacey, Military Problems, p.17.

convoys, as an advance convoy escort base St. John's could extend support across the long gap in the mid-Atlantic and provide a secure haven for rest and replenishment.[48] Nevertheless the war would be more than a year old before any concrete steps would be taken to strengthen its defences and make use of its facilities.[49]

Not only would its harbours be useful as naval stations but airports in Newfoundland could provide bases from which to fly reconnaissance, convoy protection and strike missions out into the Atlantic. And, fortuitously, by 1939 there were two available. The Gander and Botwood air bases, which were to figure so prominently as military installations in World War II, were commercial rather than military in their inception. In 1935, based on a number of successful experimental flights between North America and Europe, the governments of Great Britain, Canada, Ireland and Newfoundland agreed that a regular trans-Atlantic air service should be established as soon as landing and servicing facilities could be made available. To this end Great Britain, with Newfoundland

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[48]Bridle, External Affairs Documents, p.XLIV.

[49]For a description of the RCN's wartime efforts at building and maintaining the advance naval base at St. John's see Bernard Ransom, "Canada's 'Newfyjohn' Tenancy: The Royal Canadian Navy in St. John's 1941-1945" in Acadiensis (Vol XXIII No. 2 Spring, 1994) pp. 45-71.

sharing the cost, undertook to construct in Newfoundland an airfield and seaplane base.[50]

Botwood was selected as the site for the seaplane base. Located on the Bay of Exploits, Botwood was a seaport for the shipment of newsprint and ore. It was connected to the main line of the island's railway by a spur line and offered a large sheltered harbour for landings. The necessary preparations proceeded quickly and by 1937 the first flying boats had landed.[51]

The site selected for the airfield was on a wide level plateau in Central Newfoundland which had a reputation for good weather.[52] Additionally, it was close to Gander Lake

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[50]Bridel, External Affairs Documents, p. XLIV.

[51]Michelle Martin, The Military History of Gander Airport (unpublished manuscript prepared for Canadian Forces Base Gander, 1988) pp.3-4.

[52]The name Gander is now so familiar that it is hard to realize why there was some confusion surrounding the name of the airfield in its early years. In the beginning it was known as "the airport at Hattie's Camp near Gander Lake." In reality there was no such place as 'Hattie's Camp'. A woodsman named Hattie cut lumber in the vicinity and entered the area at Mile Post 213 on the Newfoundland Railway. The first airport workers referred to Mile Post 213 as 'Hattie's Camp'. A few miles to west of Mile Post 213 a railway work section had established a camp near Cobbs Pond, which became known as 'Cobbs Camp' a name sometimes erroneously used for the airport. After construction began in 1936 the airport was given the official name 'Newfoundland Airport'. The new railway station built to support the project was similarly

which could accommodate seaplanes. The original architects of the airfield were indeed visionaries since the aircraft which would eventually use the facility had not yet been built and their performance could not be forecast with accuracy. To allow for future requirements they decided to construct extensive landing and taxi areas with unobstructed approaches. The airfield was designed and built on massive lines. By the outbreak of war in 1939 it was completed and ready for operation. It had four large runways, the largest paved area of any airport in the world.[53] The cost which had caused so much consternation in peacetime was quickly forgotten. The value of a fully operational airport in such a strategic position could not yet be fully assessed. There was, however, a very strong perception at the time that the loss of Gander to an enemy would bring the industrial heartland of Canada within the radius of its planes.[54] Although we now know that

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named; thus the mailing address became 'Newfoundland Airport, Newfoundland Airport, Newfoundland'. This name continued in use until 1941 when it was suggested that since there were by then four operational airfields on the Island (the other three were located at Torbay, Stephenville and Argentia) the name was continually causing confusion. And so, given its location, the name Gander was adopted. For ease of usage in this paper the name Gander will be used throughout. Michelle Martin, The Military History of Gander Airport, (unpublished manuscript prepared for Canadian Forces Base Gander, 1988).

[53]Ibid., pp.6-7

[54]Graham, "Britain's Defence", p.278.

the German Luftwaffe aircraft did not possess that ability, perceptions outweighed plausibility and shaped defence thinking.

NEWFOUNDLAND'S DEFENCE DILEMMA

As the international situation deteriorated and rearmament continued apace there was consensus in Whitehall that although some increasingly belligerent states, chiefly Japan and Italy, might well threaten the far-flung territories of the British Empire, only Germany, because of its geographic position and its industrial potential, could directly threaten the survival of Britain itself.[55]

The Admiralty measured naval power in terms of battleship tonnage. Naval balance was calculated according to the relative strength of capital ships possessed by British and foreign fleets. By this calculation the fledgling German navy at the beginning of the 1930s scarcely counted since it was completely outgunned by the fifteen capital ships of the Royal Navy. Based on World War I experience, however, some far-sighted Royal Navy officers pointed out that in a future

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[55]Wesley K.Wark, The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany 1933-1939 (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) p.17.

conflict with unrestricted submarine warfare, anti-submarine warships, convoy escorts and perhaps the fleet air arm would bear a greater part of the burden. Britain was somewhat deficient in these weapons but the Admiralty placed great confidence in a new invention - ASDIC - a sonar device for locating submerged submarines, which it believed would largely nullify the submarine threat in a future war.[56]

By 1939, however, a revitalized German navy posed a formidable threat to British naval supremacy. British Naval intelligence estimated that Germany's ultra-modern navy consisted of:

> two 45,000 ton battleships, superior to any vessel afloat, but believed about a year from completion, a large aircraft carrier also uncompleted, two 26,000 ton battleships, three 10,000 ton pocket battleships, whose deadliness far exceeded their displacement; eight cruisers, twenty-two destroyers, twenty-six merchant vessels which were being converted to armed merchant cruisers, and some fifty submarines whose number was increasing by about two per month.[57]

The protecting shield of the Royal Navy, Newfoundland's only security against this growing threat, was little more than a

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[56]Ibid., p.113.

[57]Schull, Far Distant Ships, p.7.

barrier comprised of ships in constant motion. While it might eventually catch and destroy any large German assault force and probably any lone ship, it could not eliminate the possibility of a "bolt from the blue," a swift incursion by an enemy around or between the far-ranging squadrons.[58] Defence planners believed that bombardment of land targets by a single battleship or one or two cruisers or armed merchant raiders was likely.[59] A raid could be carried out against any coastal community, including St. John's, and in an hour or two would leave the town and its harbour installations a smoking ruin. Using larger ships as launching platforms, planes and motor torpedo boats might utilize mines, torpedoes, bombs, gas or assault raiding parties.[60] German U-boats were especially feared since they would certainly deploy into the Atlantic without waiting for a declaration of war. Carrying up to twenty-one torpedoes many were also heavily armed and equipped to carry mines. If serviced by supply ships they could operate for months over vast expanses of ocean.[61] Finally, although strategists had long considered the island's rigorous

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[58]Ibid., p.7.

[59]Marc Milner, The North Atlantic Run: The Royal Canadian Navy and the Battle for the Convoys (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) p.10.

[60]Ibid., p.10.

[61]Schull, Far Distant Ships, p.8.

climate and difficult terrain a sufficient deterrent to invasion, the Nazis were to demonstrate in Norway in 1940 that successful military operations could be carried out under comparable conditions.[62]

The spectre of a re-armed and increasingly belligerent Germany had already prompted the Dominions Office in 1936 to direct that the Commission of Government establish a Defence Committee to investigate the state of the island's defences. The Committee's survey resulted in Newfoundland Defence Scheme 1936 which listed the island's defence aims and objectives and made suggestions as to how these could best be met in time of war.[63] It recommended, among other things, raising a unit for home defence modelled after Great Britain's Territorial Army and reviving the Royal Naval Reserve.[64]

In March 1939 the Government of Newfoundland formally proposed the formation of the militia force recommended in Newfoundland Defence Scheme 1936 for the protection of the capital city and "other vital areas." Throughout the spring and summer its proposals for raising such a force and for

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[62]Clark, "Outpost No.1", p.252.

[63]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, pp.22-23.

[64]Nicholson, "Our Fighting Forces", p.484.

financing, equipping, training and maintaining it were the subject of much correspondence between St. John's and London.[65] Since cost was the overriding factor, the amount of funds available rather than its proposed mission determined the size and composition of the unit. In one despatch the frustrated Governor suggested that if Great Britain could not provide the wherewithall, perhaps Canada could. The Overseas Defence Committee eventually accepted the proposal and authorized the recruitment of personnel. The unit was to have an establishment of 189 (11 officers and 178 other ranks), and was to be employed guarding vulnerable points in and around St. John's and at the Bell Island iron ore mines.[66]

In St. John's plans were hastily drawn up to implement the Committee's decision. Yet, as war approached, recruiting had not yet begun and weapons, ammunition and uniforms had still to be found. Finally, on 30 August, Governor Walwyn learned that 100 rifles and 54,000 rounds of ammunition were to be shipped to Newfoundland on 5 September. However, since this allotment of weapons was less than the unit's

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[65]Ibid., p.497.

[66]G.W.L. Nicholson, More Fighting Newfoundlanders (St. John's: Government of Newfoundland, 1969) pp. 522-523. An establishment is the authorized composition of a unit expressed in numbers and ranks of personnel and numbers and types of equipment e.g. weapons and vehicles.

requirement, the Dominions Office directed Britain's High Commissioner in Ottawa to request that Canada make up the shortfall. As a result of urgent correspondence and a hasty visit to Ottawa by the Newfoundland Minister of Justice, 100 Ross rifles were provided.[67]

And so on the eve of war Newfoundland was without local defences and still dependent on the Royal Navy for its security - a military posture more suited to the previous century. Its remoteness had been reduced by technology and its location as North America's nearest point to Europe had increased its strategic worth. It would, however, take a catastrophe in Europe before these facts were fully appreciated by Great Britain and Canada.

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[67]Ibid., p.523.

CHAPTER I

THE APPROACHING CRISIS

In the aftermath of the "war to end all wars," considering the enormous task of social and economic restructuring facing the country, it is hardly surprising that the last thing in the minds of most Canadians was preparing for another war. In less than a generation, however, the European powers again found themselves drifting towards hostilities and Canada, woefully unprepared, found itself drawn inexorably into the maelstrom. Yet, while the international situation was deteriorating rapidly during the late 1930s, Canada was curiously reluctant to enter into any defence agreements respecting Newfoundland, a neighbouring Commonwealth state which commanded the approaches to Canada's eastern gateway. This position changed when the world order established at Versailles collapsed like a house of cards. In the face of a perceived threat to its safety, Canada was forced into a closer defence relationship with Newfoundland.

CANADA'S YEARS OF NEGLECT AND DECLINE

Although World War I had significant and far reaching economic, social and even political effects on Canada it had, strangely enough, negligible effect on the country's military policy. During the war the army had grown to 600,000 and at the end of hostilities all its equipment, less motor transport was brought back to Canada. The government's view, however, was that a large and well equipped army was too expensive to maintain. And so Canada quickly demobilized its armed forces and reverted to an inconsequential defence posture hardly different from prewar times.[1]

Recommendations made by the Otter Committee in 1919 set the Militia establishment at eleven infantry and four cavalry divisions. Given peacetime constraints, the actual strength never approached these figures, while inadequate funding severely restricted training and made new equipment purchases all but impossible. By the 1930s the fact that the Non-Active Permanent Militia existed at all was due in great part to the public spiritedness of its officers and men while the

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[1]C.P. Stacey, The Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Six years of War (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1957) p.4. See also James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada Vol I From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964) Chapter II "The Politics of Re-establishment," pp. 41-61.

Permanent Force was only half manned.[2] C.P. Stacey has pointed out that:

> On 30 June 1931 the Non-Permanent Active Militia's strength was 51,287 officers and other ranks as against a peace establishment of 134,843. As for the tiny regular army, the Permanent Active Militia, its peace establishment was 6,925 all ranks but its actual strength on 31 March 1931 was only 3,688.[3]

Personnel and equipment limitations notwithstanding, in the years following World War I the Army General Staff had prepared several defence plans intended to cover all military exigencies then envisioned. During the 1920s both the United States and Japan figured largely as the only two countries which could possibly present any direct threat to Canadian territory.

It is hardly surprising, then, that during the 1920s the United States was cast in Canada's military planning not as an ally but as a potential aggressor.[4] And, until 1931, when it was finally repudiated, Defence Scheme No.1, which dealt with this contingency, held sway as the official strategic doctrine

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[2]Stacey, Six Years, p.4.

[3]Ibid.

[4]James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol II Appeasement and Rearmanment (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) p.176.

for the Dominion. The central assumption on which all military planning was based held that the principal external threat to Canadian security lay in the possibility of an armed invasion by the forces of the United States.[5] Newfoundland's strategic importance to the defence of Canada in this scenario was considerable, as outlined in Section 10:

> American occupation of the Island would have far reaching results. It would be on the flank of the sea routes between Great Britain and Canada and it would be a menace to all our shipping and a base for naval operations against Nova Scotia, the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the St. Lawrence River generally. Newfoundland would appear to be a rendezvous and a probable base of operations for the British Grand Fleet.

Defence against Japan was dealt with in Defence Scheme No.2. Work was done on this plan during the years immediately following World War I but it was completed only in outline. During the 1930s it was revised to address Canadian neutrality in the event of a war between the United States and Japan.[6] Defence Scheme No.3. was designed to counter the emergency of a general war when a threat to Canadian territory was possible and overseas intervention on Canada's part probable. It therefore provided for the mobilization of the Permanent Force

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[5]James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol I p.71.

[6]Ibid., p.83.

and the Non-Active Permanent Militia. Finally, Defence Scheme No. 4. dealt with military action required following a decision by the Canadian Government to dispatch a contingent to take part in a minor empire crisis. This plan never got beyond the draft stage.[7]

Defence Scheme No.3., approved by Colonel D.M. Sutherland, Minister of National Defence on 20 January 1932, became the army's main war planning document and was regularly amended and kept up-to-date. Technically, it could not be considered a general war plan or a plan of operations until it could be discussed with potential allies, something not permitted by the government of the day. Defence Scheme No.3. remained in effect until the outbreak of war in 1939. The other two services did not possess equivalent war plans although proposals had been considered to cover all three services.[8]

Canada's woefully inadequate defence budget suffered even greater cutbacks as the full force of the Great Depression spread across the Dominion. As well, in reaction to World War I, anti-militarism and isolationism were widely held feelings which any Canadian government had to take into consideration.

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[7]Ibid., p.85.

[8]C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada 1939-1945 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970) p.108.

And so, while the war clouds gathered throughout the world, the King government, re-elected in 1935, was able to follow a policy of non-intervention with minimal opposition. Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 prompted a reassessment of defence requirements in 1937, when a modest rearmament programme for home defence was approved and again in 1938 when a plan to reorganize the Militia recommended in Defence Scheme No.3. was accepted.[9]

The Austrian Anschluss and the seizure of the Sudetenland in 1938 presented King with an inescapable dilemma. If war came Canada might again be divided along linguistic lines and the Liberal party would be scattered. All that he had worked for, national unity, the political dominance of the Liberal party, world peace and greater cooperation among the English-speaking nations, might be lost. As the European powers postured, he dithered. Should he announce Canada's support for Britain in case of a European war and risk alienating his Quebec cabinet ministers? Some Canadians demanded that Canada support Great Britain unequivocally. Many Liberals, North American nationalists and French-Canadians, however, demanded that Canada pursue an isolationist course. King's solution was to await further developments.[10]

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[9]Ibid., pp.4-6.

[10]J.L. Granatstein, Mackenzie King: His Life and World (Toronto-Montreal-New York-London: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1977) pp. 120-134 and Bruce Hutchinson, Mackenzie King: The

By this time, however, even King could no longer ignore the grave situation. His government was therefore forced to take steps to strengthen Canada's defence posture. These belated preparations, although not nearly sufficient, ensured that the country was at least better prepared than it had been in 1914. Home defences were in better shape than any time since World War I and at least some consideration was given to expanding the armed forces in the event of war. But Canada was in no way ready for any substantial overseas undertaking. This was a direct result of the government's policy of "no commitments," a policy which prohibited any consultation or joint planning with neighbours or those countries, principally the United Kingdom, with which Canada would be allied in the event of war.[11] And yet, Canada had two advantages: the vast distance of the Atlantic Ocean, and powerful friends. Consequently, while Great Britain and France held back the enemy in the opening phase of the war, Canada, secure behind the barrier of the Atlantic Ocean, had breathing space in which to prepare for the coming conflict and to complete preparations that were long overdue.[12]

CANADA'S UNCERTAINTY TOWARDS NEWFOUNDLAND

Incredible Canadian (London-New York-Toronto: Longmans Green and Co:, 1953) pp. 225-246.

[11]Stacey, Arms, p.6.

[12]Ibid., pp.5-6.

Early on military planners in Canada had realized that if war broke out in Europe, the country would likely be involved.[13] They also realized that because of its strategic importance Newfoundland must be included in any consideration of the defence of Eastern Canada. In a memorandum prepared for the Defence Minister in 1937, the Joint Staff Committee pointed out that the Defence of Canada's Atlantic coast was intimately bound up with the defence of Newfoundland and since the two problems were really one it would be a mistake to treat them separately.[14] In view of this the committee went on to suggest that matters of mutual interest concerning the defence of the two countries should be discussed at the forthcoming Imperial Conference. Prime Minister King, however, was reluctant to consider any undertaking for collective security and instructed the officers of the three services attending the conference as advisors to the Canadian Delegation not to involve the country in anything that might be construed as a commitment and to steer clear of any discussion regarding the defence of Newfoundland.[15] For Canadian military planners, Germany's annexation of Austria in March 1938 underlined the gravity of the European situation and revived concern about the defence of the Atlantic

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[13]Gilbert Tucker, The Naval Service of Canada Vols I and II (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1952) p.360.

[14]Stacey, Arms, p.92.

[15]Ibid., p.91.

seaboard. Strictly on their own initiative, military intelligence authorities requested and received from the British High Commissioner in Ottawa a copy of the Newfoundland Defence Scheme 1936. Having studied the document they noted with alarm that no action had been taken to implement any of its recommendations and that the island was still totally without defences.[16] The Joint Staff Committee therefore proposed that since Vice-Admiral Sir Humphrey Walwyn, the Governor of Newfoundland, would be visiting Ottawa at Easter, the opportunity should be taken to meet with him to discuss the situation.[17] The meeting was held on 12 April 1938 at Canadian Naval Services Headquarters with Captain C.M. Schwerdt RN, the Governor's Secretary, representing the Newfoundland Government.[18] It was agreed at the time that

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[16]Ian Stewart, The Revolution of 1940 in Newfoundland (Memorial University of Newfoundland: Master of Arts Thesis, 1974) p.40.

[17]Stacey, Arms, p.93. Appointed in 1936, Vice Admiral Sir Humphrey Walwyn, KCSI, CB, DSO would serve as Governor until the end of World War II, the last of many British naval officers to hold the position. He had had a long and distinguished career in the Royal Navy which began when he went to sea in HMS Camperdown in 1895. Making gunnery his specialty he qualified with high honours as a Gunnery Lieutenant in 1904. In World War I he commanded HMS Warspite and was awarded the DSO for gallantry at the Battle of Jutland. After World War I Vice-Admiral Walwyn's career progressed through a number of command and staff positions culminating in his appointment as Flag Officer Commanding the Royal Indian Navy from which position he retired in 1934. Daily News, 16 January 1936, p.4.

[18]Stacey, Arms, p.110. Captain C.M. Schwerdt CBE, CVO, RN, was a career officer who had served in the Royal Navy from 1904 to 1936 at which time he accepted the appointment as Governor Walwyn's Private Secretary. During World War II he

the talks were merely exploratory and that no firm commitments would be made by either side. Captain Schwerdt, aware of the political implications of any Canadian involvement in Newfoundland, was anxious to point out that Newfoundland's defence was a British responsibility. The Canadians, for their part, were concerned mainly with the security of their iron ore supply from Bell Island and the possibility of an enemy using the isolated bays along the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador as bases for attacks on Canadian shipping and territory.[19]

The meeting did little to alleviate Canadian concerns and the Joint Staff Committee urged King, in his capacity as Secretary of State for External Affairs, to inquire at the Dominions Office for details concerning measures planned for the defence of Newfoundland in the event of war.[20] The Dominions Office informed King that Newfoundland's overall defence rested with the Royal Navy and that the only local defence measure contemplated was the despatch of six mine sweepers at the outbreak of war to be followed later by three anti-submarine vessels. In addition, a squadron of patrol

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would serve as Naval Officer-in-Charge St. John's 1939-41, Captain of the Port of St. John's 1941-42 and Naval Officer-in-Charge Sydney 1942-45. Stewart, Revolution, Appendix A and Schull, Far Distant Ships, Appendix II.

[19]Stewart, Revolution, p.41.

[20]Stacey, Arms, p.93.

aircraft, which it was hoped would "be provided from some other source in the British Commonwealth" (obviously Canada), would be based at Halifax.[21] The Dominions Office authorized direct communications between the Canadian and Newfoundland Governments over Newfoundland's defence.[22] Nevertheless, although war in Europe appeared unavoidable, the King Government was still reluctant to make any peacetime military commitments outside Canada and no further action was taken for six months.

Direct contact between the Canadian and Newfoundland governments began finally in June 1939. Prompted by the deteriorating international situation, Canada became anxious to obtain as much information as possible regarding the "inlets and harbours of the coast of Labrador which could be made use of by any enemy employing submarines or aircraft against trade converging on the Gulf of St. Lawrence or Atlantic seaboard."[23] The Canadians wanted permission for a flight of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) to conduct an aerial reconnaissance. The Newfoundland Government immediately agreed and the mission was successfully executed, but no further official contact was made between the two

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[21]Ibid., p.93.

[22]Stewart, Revolution, p.40.

[23]Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland. Ottawa: 6 June 1939, 9475-40, Bridle, Documents, Documents 27.

countries before the outbreak of war and no co-ordination or joint planning of any kind took place. It was a situation which led Colonel C.P. Stacey, Canada's preeminent military analyst, to opine, "Military absurdity could not have gone much further."[24]

CANADA'S MILITARY READINESS FOR WAR

Finally, on 24 August 1939, the day the details of the Soviet-German non-aggression pact became known, Prime Minister Mackenzie King was forced to face reality and as a result met with his cabinet to discuss the critical international situation. They agreed that Canada would participate in any general conflict involving Great Britain but that the Canadian Parliament would decide the exact nature of its commitment. Within a few days the Chiefs of Staff Committee as the Joint Staff Committee had been renamed in 1938, submitted their recommendations for military operations to the Minister of National Defence.[25] The army and the navy were in favour of direct support to Great Britain. The Chief of the General Staff, Major-General T.V. Anderson, advocated raising an expeditionary force of at least divisional strength while the Chief of the Naval Staff Rear-Admiral Percy Nelles recommended

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[24]Stacey, Arms, p.93.

[25]W.A.B. Douglas, The Creation of a National Air Force: The Official History of the Royal Canadian Air Force Vol II (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) p.346.

that his naval forces be placed at the disposal of the Royal Navy. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal G.M. Croil, on the other hand, was more concerned with the air force's responsibility for the direct defence of Canada than he was with overseas commitments.[26]

At that time, the permanent establishment of Canada's naval forces consisted of 145 officers and 1,674 men. If the twenty-one divisions of the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve were included, the navy had a total paper strength of 336 officers and 3,477 men.[27] Its equipment consisted of six modern destroyers, five mine sweepers and two training vessels. Two of the destroyers and two of the mine sweepers were based at Halifax, while the remaining four destroyers and three sweepers were at Esquimalt, "a disposition which testified to the faith in the Royal Navy and to an uneasiness about Japan's intentions."[28] On 31 August, in response to the danger on the Atlantic side, two of the west coast destroyers were ordered to the east coast. On 10 September, the day Canada entered the war, the two ships were transiting the Panama Canal. They arrived at Halifax five days later.[29]

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[26]Ibid., p.343.

[27]Schull, Far Distant Ships, p.2.

[28]Ibid., p.9. and Milner, North Atlantic Run, pp. 13-14.

[29]Ibid., p.15. For a description of conditions in Canada's pre-war navy see Commander Tony German, The Sea at our Gates: The History of the Canadian Navy (Toronto:

On the same day that the two west coast destroyers sailed for Halifax, the eight existing permanent force squadrons of the RCAF began to take up their war stations. On 5 September they were joined on active service by the eleven squadrons of the Auxiliary Air Force.[30] None of the units, however, was fully manned or equipped. The air force had only 4,153 officers and airmen, little over half its authorized establishment. There were only fifty-three serviceable aircraft, thirty of which were on the east coast. A large percentage of these were of civilian pattern converted with floats for patrol work. The remainder were, for the most part, obsolete.[31]

On 25 August Major-General Anderson recommended to Cabinet that it should consider partial mobilization of the army. The government agreed and two days later all coast defences were manned and guards placed at the most vulnerable

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McClelland and Stewart Inc., 1990) Chapter 4 "Intermission" pp. 55-70 and Hugh Francis Pullen, "The Royal Canadian Navy Between the Wars 1922-1939" in James A. Boutilier, ed., The RCN in Retrospect 1910-1968 (Vancouver-London: University of British Columbia Press, 1982) pp. 62-73.

[30]Douglas, The Creation, p.151.

[31]Ibid., p.343. Also for a description of conditions in Canada's pre-war air force see Christopher F. Shores, A History of the Royal Canadian Air Force (London: Bison Books Ltd., 1984) Chapter 2 "The Inter-War years" pp. 14-25 and Larry Milberry, Sixty Years: The RCAF and Air Command 1924-1984 (Toronto: Canav Books, 1984) chapter one, "Starting from Scratch" pp. 11-58.

points - bridges, canals and hydroelectric stations.[32] On 1 September the government ordered full mobilization and the mobilization order was sent to all Military Districts. District Officers Commanding immediately put into effect the already prepared district mobilization plans and notified the militia units concerned.[33] Although these troops were marshalled with considerable speed and efficiency, they were armed almost entirely with the weapons of the previous war. The tiny Permanent Force of only 4,261 all ranks was incapable of independent action. The Non-Permanent Active Militia with a strength of 51,418 all ranks, but poorly trained and equipped, was not ready for overseas intervention. Nevertheless together the two forces constituted a suitable foundation upon which a modern army could be built.[34]

CANADA'S ENTRANCE INTO THE WAR

World War II began on the morning of 1 September 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. When Great Britain

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[32]Stacey, Six Years, pp.40-44.

[33]Ibid., p.42.

[34]Ibid., pp.33-35. Also for a description of conditions in Canada's pre-war army see Stephen J. Harris, Canadian Brass: The Making of a Professional Army 1860-1939 (Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 1988) Part IV "The Professional Army's Struggle for Legitimacy" pp. 141-209. and George F.G. Stanley, Canada's Soldiers 1604-1954: The Military History of an Unmilitary People (Toronto: Macmillan Co. of Canada Ltd., 1954) Chapter XIX "Between Two Wars" pp. 325-343.

declared war on Germany on 3 September Newfoundland was automatically a participant, making it the first belligerent in North America. By then King had summoned the Canadian Parliament to meet on 7 September. At the same time the government announced that a state of "apprehended war" existed and had existed since 25 August when the permanent forces had been placed on alert. This allowed the government to invoke the powers of the War Measures Act. Parliament duly met on 7 September to deliberate a declaration of war and on 10 September Canada declared war on Germany.[35]

In Newfoundland, Canada's declaration of war was anti-climactic, rating modest space on page four of the St. John's Evening Telegram. Already at war for seven days, Newfoundland had been the scene of the first hostile act in North America when a German merchant ship had been seized and thirty German prisoners taken.[36] The YWCA in St. John's was converted into

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[35]A.J. Kerry and W.A. McDill, The History of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers Vol II (Toronto: Thorn Press, 1966) pp. 10-11. and J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 133.

[36]The Christoph V Doornum, a German cargo vessel docked at Botwood, was about to take on board a load of paper from the Grand Falls mill. She was commandeered by the Newfoundland Constabulary acting in accordance with Newfoundland Defence Scheme 1936 which stipulated that all enemy aliens were to be interned. After her seizure she was renamed the SS Empire Commerce and entered service in the British merchant marine. Her service was short lived, unfortunately, as she was sunk by enemy action on 9 June 1940. (The Evening Telegram, St. John's 16 September 1991, p.5.)

a detention centre to house the prisoners.[37] As provided for in Newfoundland Defence Scheme 1936, wireless, telephones and private radio stations were silenced, mail and cables censored and rationing was imposed. In September the militia unit authorized by the Overseas Defence Committee began recruitment and training under the direction of Captain C. Fanning-Evans and two Senior NCOs, who had arrived in St. John's on secondment from the British Army.[38]

Canada's entrance into World War II allowed the Canadian Prime Minister to voice publicly his concern respecting the defence of Newfoundland. Speaking in Parliament on 8 September, King not only acknowledged the need to defend Newfoundland but also admitted that Canada's own defence was dependent on Newfoundland's security:

> the safety of Canada depends upon the adequate safeguarding of our coastal regions and the great avenues of approach to the heart of this country. Foremost among these is the St. Lawrence River and Gulf. At the entrance to the St. Lawrence stands the neighbouring British territory of Newfoundland and Labrador. The integrity of Newfoundland and Labrador is essential to the security of Canada. By contributing as far as we are able to the defence of Newfoundland and the other British and French territories in this hemisphere, we will not only be defending Canada but we will also be assisting Great Britain and France by enabling them to concentrate their own energies more in that part of the world in

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[37]The Evening Telegram, St. John's, 11 September 1939, p.5.

[38]G.W.L. Nicholson, More Newfoundlanders, pp.529-530.

which their own immediate security is at stake.[39]

However, urgent defence problems at home such as organizing and dispatching the 1st Division overseas prevented the Canadian Government from taking any immediate direct action concerning Newfoundland's defence.[40]

Canada's only involvement in Newfoundland during the opening weeks of the war came when the Admiral of the Royal Navy's American and West Indies Squadron requested the RCAF to undertake an aerial reconnaissance of the Newfoundland coast on his behalf to ascertain if any enemy ships were in adjacent waters. In response Canada requested authority from the Newfoundland Government to overfly its territory and make use of local landing facilities should they be required.[41] Governor Walwyn promptly agreed.[42]

The Newfoundland Government by now realized that although the airport at Gander and the seaplane base at Botwood would

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[39]Extracts from a speech by the Prime Minister, Ottawa, 8 September 1939, H.D.C. Bridle, Documents, Document 41.

[40]Tucker, Naval Service Vol I, p.186.

[41]Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland, Ottawa, 2 September 1939, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 35.

[42]Governor of Newfoundland to Secretary of State for External Affairs, St. John's, 3 September 1939, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 37.

undoubtedly prove to be extremely useful assets in the war effort, Newfoundland, for obvious reasons, would be unable to make maximum use of these resources. In light of this and prompted by Prime Minister King's speech of 8 September in which he publicly proclaimed interest in the defence of Newfoundland, the Governor proposed in a cable to the Dominions Office on 15 September that Canada be invited to assume control of both facilities for the use of the RCAF for the duration of the war.[43]

This proposal, however, received little support in London and was ultimately rejected on the grounds that it would interfere with plans for civil aviation! The British Government had no objections to the RCAF using these facilities on suitable terms should Canada request it. But because Britain had invested heavily in these facilities and since an attack on Newfoundland seemed highly improbable they saw no advantage in turning them over to the Canadians. The future disposition of Gander and Botwood was simply too important to allow them to pass out of British control for any period of time.[44]

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[43]Governor of Newfoundland to Dominions Secretary, St. John's, 15 September 1939, NPA GN1/3 39/1-7. Bridle, Documents, Document 44.

[44]Dominions Secretary to Governor of Newfoundland, London, 6 November 1939, NPA 5-5-5-2. Bridle, Documents, Document 51.

The protection of the Dominion Steel and Coal Company's iron ore mines and the loading and shipping facilities at Bell Island, however, had long been of prime concern to Canada, since it was the main source of iron ore for the Sydney smelters and accounted for thirty percent of the country's productive capacity in steel. If the war was protracted, Bell Island would increase in importance as the need for Canadian steel expanded.[45] In view of the paucity of local resources the Newfoundland Government decided that Canada should be asked to take on responsibility for Bell Island's defence and requested the Dominions Office to ask the British High Commissioner in Ottawa to take up the matter with the Canadian authorities.[46] Despite the admitted urgency, Canada was slow to respond, and it was not until 13 March 1940 that the Cabinet decided that, because of the importance of the Bell Island iron ore supply, the defence of Bell Island should become a Canadian responsibility. Accordingly, coast defence guns along with two searchlights were installed.[47]

On 25 March Newfoundland accepted the Canadian proposals concerning Bell Island. On 17 June, Major H.E. Dickson of the 3rd Fortress Company Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE) travelled to Newfoundland to carry out the necessary reconnaissance. By

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[45]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, pp.32-33.

[46]Ibid., p.33.

[47]Stacey, Arms, p.135.

the end of the month sappers of 2nd Fortress Company RCE under Lieutenant J.C. Arsenault started construction of a well camouflaged battery position overlooking the loading pier on the east side of the island, the first of many such projects in Newfoundland.[48]

Despite Prime Minister King's public statements, as late as the summer of 1940 military cooperation between Canada and Newfoundland was still very limited. Although some tentative steps were taken during the period of the "phony war" they were not of any great significance. Up to this point Canada had only undertaken reconnaissance flights over Newfoundland, provided some equipment for the fledgling Newfoundland Militia and supplied coast artillery for the defence of Bell Island. Canada's use of Newfoundland's potentially valuable harbours and air facilities had not yet even been discussed. This state of affairs, however, soon changed.

From the outset King maintained that Parliament would determine the extent of Canada's war effort and, as much as anyone, he hoped that Canada's military contribution could be kept to a minimum. The period of the "phony war" had given rise to the hope that the action taken up to this point, that is, limited naval support to Britain, the dispatch of an army division overseas and the air force's assumption of its

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[48]Kerry, Engineers, p.66.

wartime posture in Canada, might prove sufficient. And although at the outbreak of war Newfoundland had been included within the Canadian defence perimeter, it was hardly foreseen at the time that it might become a liability. Dramatic events in Europe, however, would soon force an abrupt turn on Canada's part.

CHAPTER II

DEFENDING NEWFOUNDLAND

THE OPENING PHASE

Although Newfoundland's strategic location made it central to military planning for the defence of North America, its lack of defences left it vulnerable to attack. The probability of invasion was remote, but, given the then current perception, raids by sea or air could not be ruled out of the question. The Canadian Chiefs of Staff Committee, recognizing the potential of Newfoundland's two major air facilities, Gander airfield and Botwood seaplane base, recommended that they be secured. No action was taken, however, until the fall of Europe when Canada offered to station troops at both places. As this small component took up its duties in Newfoundland the Canadian Army set about reorganizing its military posture in Eastern Canada, part of which now included framing military requirements for the defence of Newfoundland. A formation, designated W Force, was created to defend the island against an enemy incursion, man fixed defences and to provide security for existing and proposed defence facilities. Its arrival in Newfoundland in

November 1940 bolstered local defence organizations such as the Newfoundland Militia and the Civil Defence Organization.

THE DECISION TO SEND TROOPS TO NEWFOUNDLAND

In the spring of 1940 the entire war situation changed drastically as Hitler unleashed the full force of his war machine against western Europe. As a consequence, on 16 April 1940 Mr. O.D. Skelton, Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, advised the British High Commissioner in Canada that an officer from Eastern Air Command would travel to Newfoundland to inspect local air facilities. He also confirmed Canada's desire to deploy at some future date an air force detachment at Botwood on temporary duty.[1] Although Governor Walwyn again urged the Dominions Office, in two separate cables, to re-examine his proposal to hand over Gander and Botwood to Canada for the duration of the war, the British Government remained reluctant to transfer the control of these resources to a third party.[2]

By the end of May 1940 Air Commodore N.R. Anderson, Air Officer Commanding Eastern Air Command, concluded that Gander

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[1]Under Secretary of State for External Affairs to High Commissioner of Great Britain, Ottawa 16 April 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 71.

[2]Governor of Newfoundland to Dominions Secretary, St. John's, 14 May 1940, NPA GN1/3 320/35. Bridle, Documents, Document 74.

Airport, as the main airport from which to dispatch aircraft to the European Theatre, would be of paramount importance to the Allied war effort. He recommended to the Secretary of Defence that Canada station bomber-reconnaissance and fighter aircraft along with adequate ground defence at the airfield to ensure its protection.[3]

On 3 June 1940 Walwyn sent off yet another dispatch to London this time informing the British Government that Air Vice Marshal G.M. Croil, Chief of Canada's Air Staff, expected to visit Newfoundland while on a tour of Maritime Canada. Walwyn was anxious to get the future status of Gander and Botwood settled while Croil was in St. John's and he pressed the British Government to make a decision before Croil arrived.[4] Two days later, he received the reply he wanted. The British Government would allow the RCAF to operate from the Newfoundland air bases. It also agreed in principle to a Canadian take-over of these bases for the duration of the war.[5]

Walwyn was no politicion, consequently his performance as

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[3]Air Officer Commanding, Eastern Air Command, to Secretary, Department of National Defence, Halifax, 29 May 1940, DND HQs 35-8-1. Bridle, Documents, Document 79.

[4]Governor of Newfoundland to Dominions Secretary, St. John's, 3 Jun 1940, NPA 5-5-5-2. Bridle, Documents, Document 80.

[5]Dominions Secretary to Governor of Newfoundland, London, 5 Jun 1940, NA, GN1/3 320-35. Bridle, Documents, Document 81.

head of a civilian administration was arguable.[6] The retired admiral, however, proved his worth in war time. His service background made him acutely aware that in the new strategic situation of 1940 Great Britain's control of the North Atlantic was essential for its survival and Newfoundland's strategic location made it vital in this struggle. Realizing that the hard-pressed Royal Navy could no longer guarantee Newfoundland's safety he aggressively lobbied for Canada's involvement in its defence. This position would be fully vindicated as the war progressed.

The day following their visit to Gander Croil and Anderson met with representatives of the Newfoundland Government in St. John's. Their mission, they pointed out, was a fact finding one. They had no authority to enter into negotiations. But, in Croil's view, neither base was suitable for air operations until ground forces were in place to provide security. And, if Gander were captured by an enemy force the base would be a "menace" to North American defence. As to Canada's assumption of full control of the air bases Croil felt that there were grave concerns about the country's

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[6]S.J.R. Noel describes Walwyn as "a bluff and hearty sea-fearing man totally innocent of any experience in government or public administration. But for an accident of birth he could as easily become governor in 1736 as 1936." (Noel, Politics, p. 238.) See also p.37.

ability to discharge so great a responsibility.[7]

The speed of the enemy victory in Europe was astounding. In April Germany struck at Norway and Denmark overrunning Belgium and Holland a month later. The full force of the Nazi blitzkrieg was then directed at France and in three weeks the government capitulated. Although the British expeditionary force was rescued from Dunkirk, they were without weapons. The Nazis now controlled all of continental Europe from the North Cape to the Bay of Biscay and Italy's entry into the war on Germany's side, on 10 June 1940, carried the battle to the Mediterranean and Africa.[8] Within six weeks all of Great Britain's European allies had been knocked out of the war leaving Canada, as the largest Dominion, Great Britain's major partner. With the addition of the Italian fleet the Axis powers, in a single stroke, had become a major naval threat and there loomed the distinct possibility that the French fleet might also come under enemy control.[9] The question on every mind was, can Great Britain hold out? If Great Britain collapsed the Atlantic would be an open highway over which the enemy could proceed without hindrance.

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[7]Governor of Newfoundland of Dominions Secretary, St. John's, 6 June 1940, NPA 5-5-5-2. Bridle, Documents, Document 82.

[8]Bridle, Documents, p.XXIII.

[9]MacKay, Newfoundland, p.493.

As the magnitude of the disaster in Europe sunk in, Canada's relations with Newfoundland underwent a fundamental change. To this point Canada had resisted making any formal defence agreements with Newfoundland, but the catastrophic events on the western front spurred the Canadian Government into action. On 14 June 1940, the same day that Paris fell, the Canadian Cabinet War Committee held a special meeting to discuss the European crisis. On the agenda was Newfoundland's defence. The island's strategic location and the importance of its air facilities made its security a matter of vital concern to Canada.[10] While no large scale attack on Newfoundland was immediately anticipated, Mr. C.G. Power, then Acting Minister of National Defence, considered it prudent to provide sufficient troops to counter a possible raid on Gander or Botwood. As it was within Canada's means to provide an adequate force for this limited purpose, he recommended that Canada immediately contact the governments of Newfoundland and the United Kingdom with an offer to send troops.[11] With cabinet approval he sent the following telegram to St. John's:

> The Canadian Government having viewed the matter of the defence of Newfoundland in light of existing conditions are now of the opinion it would be advisable to have additional defence forces stationed in Newfoundland for the

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[10]Minutes of a Meeting of Cabinet War Committee, Ottawa, 14 June 1940, CWC. Bridle, Documents, Document 84.

[11]Ibid.

> protection aerodrome [Gander] and Botwood seaplane base. The forces considered desirable for the purpose are one flight of bomber-reconnaissance aircraft to be stationed at the Newfoundland aerodrome [Gander] and to be augmented by one flight of fighter aircraft when suitable aircraft become available. Also, a military force for ground protection consisting of one infantry battalion with personnel of other arms as required.[12]

Replying immediately, Governor Walwyn informed the Canadian authorities that "the Commission of Government have examined the proposals and approved them."[13] On 17 June five Douglas Digby aircraft of the RCAF No. 10 (Bomber Reconnaissance) Squadron arrived at Gander Airport from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

Given the clarity of hindsight and the now-established fact that Nazi Germany did not have the capability to mount a cross-Atlantic assault, Canada's reaction to events in Europe might seem extreme. It was, however, based on the best intelligence available to the government at that time. After a meeting with the Minister of National Defence Colonel J.L. Ralston and C.G. Power, now Minister of National Defence for Air, the United States Minister to Canada, Jay Pierrepont

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[12]Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland, Ottawa 15 June 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 106.

[13]Governor of Newfoundland to Secretary of State for External Affairs, St. John's, 16 June 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 108.

Moffat, confided in a dispatch to Washington on 29 June 1940:

> The Canadians are definitely worried about the possibility of an air raid. They understand that Germany has a vessel capable of carrying about 40 aircraft and if this should escape the British blockade, particularly if accompanied by a cruiser she could do great damage.[14]

The feared "great damage" was, of course, a raid on Gander.

THE TASK IS ASSIGNED

At the same time as No. 10 Squadron prepared for its deployment Lieutenant-Colonel K.G. Blackader, Officer Commanding the Black Watch (Royal Highlanders of Canada) received a directive which read in part:

> You will command army detachment proceeding Newfoundland. Detachment of RCE proceeding separately will come under your command when it arrives Newfoundland. Your task will be protection Newfoundland Airport [Gander] and Botwood Seaplane Base against sabotage and/or ground attack by enemy armed Forces. You will also provide small arm anti-aircraft defence above localities.[15]

Given the urgency of the situation the unit departed its

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[14]Nancy H. Hooker, ed., The Moffat Papers: Selections from the Diplomatic Journals of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press 1956) p. 315.

[15]Chief of the General Staff to District Officer Commanding Quebec, 16 June 1940, DND HQs 7410. Bridle, Documents, Document 110.

station at Camp Valcartier the following day for Quebec City where it boarded the SS Antonia.[16] For security reasons personnel were not informed of their destination until the ship was though the Gulf of St. Lawrence and out into the Atlantic. When they learned it was Newfoundland and not Britain reaction was mixed, although most felt that if nothing else the battalion's efficiency and high state of training had been recognized.[17] On the advice of Governor Walwyn the troop ship headed directly to Botwood since that port provided an excellent harbour, wharfage space and train connections. Furthermore, it was much closer to Gander.[18] In less than a week the Antonia berthed at Botwood and, while the battalion prepared to disembark, Blackader and his adjutant undertook a reconnaissance ashore. The following day the unit proceeded to its duties in Botwood and Gander.[19]

Two companies under Major I.L. Ibbotson remained at Botwood to protect the harbour and prepare local defences while the balance of the battalion under Blackader entrained for Gander. In the absence of military barracks tented camps were hastily erected at both locations. There were no proper

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[16]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 006, 17 June 1940.

[17]Ibid., 19 June 1940

[18]Governor of Newfoundland to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 17 June 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 113.

[19]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 006, 21-22 June 1940.

maps available, Ibbotson made do with an old Admiralty Chart of 1903 and Blackader an Imperial Oil Company tourist map.[20] Conditions were extremely primitive, described as "a few rough buildings, a bleak terrain, hordes of giant mosquitos and blackflies and constant rain."[21] Conditions notwithstanding, much was accomplished during the Highlanders' short stay. During the first week at both locations a detailed reconnaissance was carried out and although the terrain was extremely rocky, the Highlanders quickly established a defensive perimeter with dug-in weapons pits and sandbagged and camouflaged sections posts manned around the clock.

A military organization, of whatever size, upon being assigned a defensive task, must immediately formulate a plan of defence based on - to use World War II parlance - "A Military Appreciation of the Situation." If or when the situation changed a new appreciation was undertaken and the plan revised accordingly to reflect the altered situation. The whole procedure rests on possible and/or probable enemy action based on his capabilities and/or intentions as estimated by the intelligence staff. As we shall see later, however, despite a changing situation the enemy threat assessment or "scales of attack" as it was then called, little

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[20]Paul P. Hutchison, Canada's Black Watch: The First Hundred Years 1862-1962, (Don Mills, Ontario: Best Printing Co. Ltd., 1962).

[21]Ibid.

changed in Newfoundland until after the successful Normandy landings. The result was that defensive measures implemented early on were kept in place even after their necessity had all but disappeared.

In the Gander/Botwood area the Canadian military intelligence believed the enemy could attack the Gander facility "by bombing by parachutists, by landing troops from aircraft on the runways or Gander Lake or by advancing overland from some point or by a combination of these methods."[22] In Botwood intelligence assessed the threat as "bombardment by a capital ship, one or two 8-in cruisers or 6-in merchant cruisers; attack by submarines, small surface craft or raiding parties; torpedo, bomb or gas attack by shipborne or long-range shore-based aircraft."[23] As far-fetched as these enemy threat assessments might seem today they were based on the best information available at the time and were considered an accurate reflection of enemy capabilities and intentions.

We now know that Nazi Germany did not have the capability of mounting a coordinated attack against North America in World War II. Given the perception at the time, however, the threat of hostile action, although remote, was not

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[22]WD, NAC, RG 24, Volume 13, 807, 7 May 1941.

[23]Ibid.

inconceivable and the possibility of air or sea raids was a contingency which had to be considered. Perhaps even more important in the minds of many of the civil population, given the alarming achievements of the Nazi war machine in its opening campaigns, not only was an enemy assault viewed as possible, but also even likely. And, as we have seen earlier, the threat of enemy ships in Newfoundland waters, given the danger they posed to Canadian shipping and territory, was not taken lightly. It is hardly surprising then that when reports of enemy activity off the top of the Great Northern Peninsula reached Naval Headquarters in Halifax during the first week of July 1940, reaction was swift. With Newfoundland's concurrence a joint naval/army operation was hastily mounted.[24] The plan called for HMCS Ottawa, commanded by Commander E.R. Mainguy RCN, to undertake a patrol in the area of Cape Bauld to conduct a search. Additionally, an infantry detachment was embarked to undertake a reconnaissance ashore. B Company of the Pictou Highlanders, stationed at Sydney Mines took on this mission. To mask his movements, on the night of 10 July, Major C.D. Sampson led his company, less one platoon, aboard the destroyer at the Newfoundland Railway Dock in North Sydney and immediately set sail for the Strait of Belle Isle.[25]

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[24]James M. Cameron, Pictonians in Arms: A Military History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia, (Fredericton, New Brunswick: University of New Brunswick Unipress, 1969) pp. 123-124.

[25]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 138, 10 July 1940.

Upon arrival on the morning of 13 July the Ottawa conducted a thorough search of the coastline from Cape Norman to Cremaillere Harbour. The infantry detachment, divided into six independent sections supplied with all necessary weapons, ammunition, and radios plus sufficient rations for three days, landed by whalers at Cook's Harbour, Pistolet Bay, Cape Onion, Quirpon, Griquet and St. Lunaire. Their task was to question local inhabitants concerning any suspicious activity and to reconnoitre the area for evidence of any enemy landings. Locals claimed to have sighted submarines off the coast at different times but the information was unverified and therefore considered unreliable. When no evidence of enemy activity was discovered the sections were re-embarked on the 15th for return to Nova Scotia.[26] Nevertheless the assignment probably benefited the Highlanders. In his report to Headquarters Military District No. 6. Major Sampson wrote "I wish to state that every member of the detachment was at all times fully prepared for action. The morale of my command is of the highest order, and we earnestly hope that we may be able to take part in an assignment in which enemy action is encountered."[27]

In Botwood, from the moment of their arrival in June 1940, the Black Watch were badgered by jittery inhabitants

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[26] Ibid., 15 July 1940.

[27] Ibid., 19 July 1940.

with accounts of supposed enemy sightings in and around the settlement, the surrounding waters and adjacent coastline. Since every report had to be verified, the unit's normal routine was interrupted to the point where the War Diary entry for 5 July 1940 complained that "unfounded reports by locals of enemy aircraft and ship sightings plus landings, which must all be checked out [are] causing considerable work and bother."[28]

The main function of the Botwood detachment was the security of the harbour and seaplane docking facilities. Sentries were posted at several locations around the harbour and the approaches to it, supplemented by a roving patrol. These duties were assigned to one company. A second company supplied men for camp fatigues, conducted individual training as time permitted, and remained on stand-by prepared to reinforce any threatened area.[29] One section from the guard company was stationed aboard the Newfoundland customs cutter Marvitta and boarded and inspected each ship before it entered the harbour. Once the visiting vessel was tied up, the dockside guard inspected seamen's passes and prevented crew members from unauthorized landings. At the docks they inspected longshoremen's passes and prevented unauthorized

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[28]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 006, 5 July 1940.

[29]In Canadian army parlance a fatigue is a non-military duty, for example, kitchen duty, and this is the meaning attached to this word throughout the paper.

persons from boarding the ship. During the winter freeze up, when the harbour was closed to shipping, sentries were withdrawn from the outlying areas and concentrated within the port itself.[30] A plan to evacuate the civilian population in case of an air raid was worked out with the local Home Defence committee.[31]

In Gander the principal military task was the protection and security of the airfield organized around two separate duties. One company was assigned to guard the outer perimeter or "outpost duty" as it was called, while the other looked after the security of the facility itself referred to as "airport duty." The third company carried out what training it could while supplying men for camp fatigues. Liaison was quickly established with the RCAF detachment and "strafing and bombing" exercises designed to practise anti-aircraft drills were carried out.[32]

On 25-26 July Major-General T.V. Anderson, former Chief of the General Staff and now the Inspector General, visited the unit. On the whole, Anderson was satisfied with the accomplishments of the battalion. Blackader, however, pointed out that given the immense size of the airfield (the perimeter

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[30]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 227, 11 December 1940.

[31]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 006, 18 July 1940.

[32]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 006, 30 June 1940.

was greater than seven miles) it was highly improbable that it could be defended by his two lightly armed infantry companies. In the event of a determined assault by a large attacking force the facility would have to be destroyed and abandoned.[33] This assessment coincided with that of Air Commodore N.R. Anderson, Air Officer Commanding Eastern Air Command, who had reconnoitred the airfield earlier. Anderson had reported that the airport was unsafe to use until provision had been made for adequate ground defence including "strong anti-aircraft (AA) defence consisting of guns, searchlights, and sound locators."[34] Since there was an almost total lack of these weapons systems in Canada at the time, more than a year would go by before they were put in place.

Some work had been done to improve the facility but in July sappers from 2nd Fortress Company arrived and began clearing campsites and constructing wooden barracks to replace the tents that housed the troops in Botwood. The camp was sited just west of the village proper, nestled in a small valley between two prominent hill features, Kings Ridge and Canning Rock. These provided excellent observation posts of the harbour and its approaches. By the end of the month daily routine was in place and some unit training organized within

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[33] Ibid., 25 July 1940.

[34] Air Officer Commanding Eastern Command to Secretary, Department of National Defence, 29 May 1940, DND HQs 35-8-1. Bridle, Documents, Document 79.

the constraints of fatigues and around-the-clock guard duties. Morale was the most difficult issue since the hours were long with little recreation to relieve the boredom. Regimental spirits soared when, on 27 July, a coded message was received warning that the battalion would soon be proceeding overseas.[35]

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, then stationed at Camp Borden, Ontario, had already been warned on 22 July of a possible move. Preparations began immediately. On 4 August the battalion advance party, consisting of Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. MacKendrick and four officers and twenty other ranks, departed by train for Newfoundland. Two days later the remainder of the battalion departed by train for Quebec City where it immediately embarked on the SS Dutchess of Richmond arriving at Botwood on 10 August.[36] A and B Companies and a detachment from Headquarters Company under the command of Major W.L. Bryan relieved the two companies of the Black Watch in Botwood while the remainder of the unit under Lieutenant-Colonel MacKendrick proceeded by rail to Gander. The change of command took place at Gander on the afternoon of 10 August.[37] Although guard duties and fatigues accounted for the bulk of activity, unit training continued. Likely

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[35]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 006, 27 July 1940.

[36]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 166, 22 July - 10 August 1940.

[37]Ibid., 10 August 1940.

approaches for enemy raiding parties were reconnoitred around Twillingate, Port Leamington, Notre Dame Junction and along the Gander River from Glendale to Gander Bay. The RCAF provided aircraft for reconnaissance of the coastal areas.[38]

On 19 August C.G. Power, Minister of National Defence for Air, accompanied by senior officers of all three services, arrived in Gander on a tour of inspection.[39] During their discussions MacKendrick endorsed Blackader's earlier recommendations for the construction of concrete emplacements and installation of AA artillery.[40] Satisfied with the unit's accomplishments the dignitaries departed for St. John's to hold bilateral discussions with the Newfoundland government. MacKendrick accompanied the party to discuss training of the Newfoundland Militia, a task taken on by the Canadians for the duration of the War.

Shortly thereafter Major-General Elkins, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Atlantic Command, and his Chief of Staff,

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[38]W.T. Barnard, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada 1860-1960, (Don Mills, Ontario: Best Printing Co. Ltd., 1960) p.147.

[39]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 166, 19-20 August 1940.

[40]Additionally, he suggested that a small detachment be stationed at Lewisporte to the northeast to guard its important fuel depot and provide early warning of any emergency. In consequence, an infantry section under the command of a sergeant was despatched to Lewisporte on 22 August. Lewisporte would grow in military importance and ultimately be home to a coast artillery battery, an AA battery, an infantry company and ancillary troops. Ibid.

Colonel L.C. Goodeve, visited Gander to reconnoitre positions for coast artillery in the Botwood and Lewisporte areas.[41] Later Colonel C.S. Craig, Commander of Halifax Fortress and an experienced permanent force gunner whose advise senior commanders on the east coast respected and sought, arrived to select positions for AA guns.[42] In the meantime construction of permanent huts to house the unit began in Gander under the supervision of Second Lieutenant R. Macleod RCE and a small engineer detachment. Work continued apace and by the first week of October, all the men were in barracks.[43]

In mid-November news arrived that the battalion was to return to Canada in the near future. Final confirmation came on 18 November. On 6 December the Queen's Own embarked for Canada to join 3 Infantry Division in Camp Sussex, New Brunswick.[44] Their replacements were the Royal Rifles of Canada, then stationed at Camp Sussex. On 20 November 1940 an advance party under Captain E.E. Denison departed by train for Newfoundland, followed by the main body which arrived in Botwood on 25 November aboard the SS New Northland.[45] First impressions were not favourable as the regimental diarist

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[41]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 166, 5 September 1940.

[42]Ibid., 20 September 1940.

[43]Barnard, The Queen's Own, pp.150-152.

[44]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 166, 15 November - 6 December 1940.

[45]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 227, 12-2- November 1940.

recorded: "This morning we awoke on board ship to gaze for the first time on our new home. Botwood we found to be the most dismal apology for a town any of us had ever seen."[46] Nor was he impressed with the accommodations: "taking over the Botwood Barracks we found them to be in the most wretchedly filthy condition imaginable... our men were amazed that other men, and fine looking soldiers at that, could and would tolerate such unwholesome conditions."[47] Local conditions notwithstanding by 6 December the battalion was fully deployed and Lieutenant-Colonel Home took over command from Lieutenant-Colonel MacKendrick of the Queen's Own. A and D Companies under Major C.A. Young remained in Botwood while B,C and Headquarters Companies took responsibility for the security of Gander.[48] For morale purposes, companies were rotated between Botwood and Gander regularly since the Botwood detachment was able to proceed on pass to Grand Falls and Bishop's Falls, where the locals made them welcome. Gander on the other hand was totally isolated.[49]

SECURITY OF THE ATLANTIC COAST

At the meeting of 14 June the Cabinet War Committee also

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[46]Ibid., 25 November 1940.

[47]Ibid., 26 November 1940.

[48]Ibid., 6-10 December 1940.

[49]Ibid., 10 January 1941.

recommended that joint staff talks begin immediately between Canadian and American armed service officers concerning the defence of the Atlantic coast.[50] As a result of these meetings Canada decided to station military and naval attachés in Washington to join the air attaché already serving there. But no provision had yet been made for permanent and continuous high level consultations between the two countries.[51] Consequently a meeting between the President and the Prime Minister was arranged. The outcome of this meeting, which will be dealt with in greater detail later, was the Ogdensburg Agreement which created a Canadian-American Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) to study hemispheric defence problems. The Board provided the mechanism whereby the two countries -one at peace, the other already a belligerent - could harmonize their defence initiatives. The first and most important of these for Canada at this juncture was to strengthen its Newfoundland garrison.

During the summer of 1940, as the magnitude of the disaster in Europe became clearer, the Chiefs of Staff Committee turned their attention to creating a new command structure for the Atlantic coast to include Newfoundland. Up to this time each District Officer Commanding had operational

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[50]Minutes of a Meeting of Cabinet War Committee, Ottawa, 14 June 1940, Bridle, Documents, Document 84.

[51]A Brief History of the Canadian - United States Joint Board on Defence 1940-1960, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1960) pp.1-5.

responsibility only for the forces within his own district. Under this arrangement, however, there was a possibility that a District Officer Commanding might consider the needs of his own district to the detriment of defence as a whole. Additionally effective co-operation with the Navy and the Air Force had to be maintained.[52] Accordingly, the Chiefs of Staff directed its Joint Planning Sub-Committee, consisting of senior staff officers from all three services, to prepare a full scale report on the defensive situation on the Atlantic coast. The subcommittee suggested that, apart from maintaining static defences, the army's main role should be the maintenance of a large force of at least two divisions' strength capable of reinforcing any threatened point. Major-General H.D.G. Crerar, then Vice Chief of the General Staff, modified the proposal by suggesting the creation of a mobile reserve of divisional size consisting of a headquarters and three brigade groups to reinforce coastal garrisons, to counter any enemy raids on non-garrisoned coastal areas, and to maintain internal security.[53] After he became Chief of the General Staff (CGS) on 22 July, Crerar recommended that operational command of these forces be transferred from the existing Military Districts to a new Command Headquarters responsible for the whole of the east coast including the

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[52]G.W.L. Nicholson The Gunners of Canada: The History of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery, Vol II 1919-1967, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1972) pp. 450-452.

[53]Stacey, Six Years, pp. 161-163.

Maritime Provinces, Eastern Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. Under this arrangement Districts retained responsibility for the training, administration and maintenance of all units within their jurisdiction other than those under operational command of the new Headquarters. Administrative responsibility for Newfoundland would go to Military District No. 6 (Nova Scotia).[54] Colonel J.L. Ralston, the Minister of National Defence, approved the recommendations and on 1 August 1940 Atlantic Command with Headquarters at Halifax was established.[55] Major-General W.H.P. Elkins was appointed General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOCinC).[56]

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Atlantic Command reached its peak strength in the spring of 1943 at which time the number of personnel in the Command numbered approximately 25,000. In the course of 1943, however, the threat of direct attack on Canada, which was never very great anyway, receded appreciably and a reduction in the number of troops employed in home defence duties was warranted. Consequently Major-General K. Stuart, Chief of the General Staff, recommended the disbandment of the 7th Division as well as substantial reductions in coast and anti-aircraft defences. His recommendation was accepted and in September 1943 the Minister of National Defence announced the decision. This was the beginning of a long process of troop reductions in Canada to free men up for overseas duty. In December 1944 a decision was finally taken to disband Headquarters Atlantic Command. The Military Districts in eastern Canada resumed their normal function while Newfoundland was designated as a separate command similar to a district. (Stacey, Six Years, pp.175-186)

[56] Elkins had been commissioned into the Royal Canadian Artillery in 1905. He served in Canada and saw service in India while attached to the Royal Horse Artillery. In World War I he served with the Canadian Expeditionary Force in France and Flanders and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in command of an artillery regiment. He was mentioned in despatches three times and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and Bar. After the war he held a number

Meanwhile, in early August 1940, before the Ogdensburg meeting, the Minister of National Defence for Air, C.G. Power, arranged during a visit to Canadian troops in Newfoundland to meet with the Newfoundland Government to consider bilateral defence questions. He was en route to Newfoundland when King was at Ogdensburg.[57] Accompanied by senior officers from all three services he met with Newfoundland Government representatives on 20 August. The meeting was chaired by Governor Walwyn, who, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland, offered full co-operation in meeting Canada's proposals for the defence of North America. Power outlined Canada's aims in broad terms and stressed that there were to be no encroachments of Newfoundland's "autonomous rights," but he did ask "if the principle could be admitted that Canada should be in charge of Newfoundland's defence without modification."[58] The Newfoundland representatives demurred at such a broad grant of power since they felt there might well

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of command and staff appointments. In 1930 he was appointed Commandant of the Royal Military College of Canada, a position he held until 1935. He commanded Military District No. 2 in the rank of Brigadier from 1935 to 1938 when he was appointed the Master-General of the Ordnance of Canada in the rank of Major General. Major-General Elkins retained his appointment as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Atlantic Command unit his retirement in July 1943. (Evening Telegram 20 Aug 1940 p. 3)

[57]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, pp.45-46.

[58]Minutes of a Meeting at St. John's to Discuss Bilateral Defence Questions, St. John's, 20 August 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 171.

be some "modifications" which they would have to consider.[59]

Principle notwithstanding, progress was made on a number of practical matters aimed at strengthening the island's defences. The Newfoundland Government agreed to enact a Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act similar to those in force in the self-governing Dominions of the Commonwealth. In accordance with this legislation both governments formally declared that their forces were "acting in combination."[60] Under this arrangement the local Canadian military commander had overall command and Newfoundland became a sub-command of Atlantic Command. Canada agreed to station an additional infantry battalion at St. John's and to provide necessary AA and coast artillery at selected locations when it became available. Additionally, Canada proposed to develop an advanced naval base at St. John's and a fighter air base in the vicinity of the capital city.[61] The last agenda topic dealt with relations with the United States.[62] The

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[59]Ibid.

[60]As we shall see later, this issue would again surface during the summer of 1942 and cause considerable friction between the two parties.

[61]Bridle, Documents, Document 171.

[62]On August 13, 1940 President Roosevelt cabled Prime Minister Churchill requesting the lease of military bases in Britain's Atlantic possessions. In return the American president offered to transfer to the United Kingdom fifty World War I destroyers which the British prime minister had been seeking since May. A deal was ultimately struck whereby the United States would receive ninety-nine year leases in Newfoundland

Newfoundland Government stressed the fact that it should be represented in any discussions between Canada and the United States where questions affecting Newfoundland were involved.[63]

The formal announcement of these agreements was issued on 22 August 1940 and it was noted in the local press that "no question involving in any way Newfoundland's sovereignty or independence was being raised."[64] Power, by treating Newfoundland as an equal, despite the vast discrepancy in economic and political weight, made the presence of Canadian forces in Newfoundland far more agreeable.[65]

W FORCE COMES INTO EXISTENCE

At a meeting in Boston on 2 October 1940 the service members of the PJBD approved the establishment in St. John's of a Headquarters Canadian Troops in Newfoundland consisting

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and Bermuda as outright gifts while bases in the Caribbean would be exchanged for destroyers. Although Newfoundland and Canada had been kept informed of the impending agreement and cognizance had been taken of their sensitivities they had no part in determining the fundamental basis of the accord. The terms of the agreement were hammered out between the British and the Americans and they reflected the interests of the two great powers. At Canadian insistence, however, the three countries signed a protocol clarifying the Canadian interest in Newfoundland. (MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, pp. 48-50 and Stewart, Revolution, pp. 57-59)

[63]Bridle, Documents, Document 171.

[64]The Evening Telegram, 22 August 1940, p.3.

[65]Bridle, Documents, p.XXVII.

of a brigadier with an augmented brigade staff.[66] Two weeks later the Minister of National Defence announced the formation of W Force.[67] Brigadier P Earnshaw was appointed Commander.[68]

Earnshaw's initial concern was the organization and manning details of his new command. On 4 November he travelled to Halifax to discuss with Elkins details of the command and administrative relationships between the two headquarters. W Force was to be a sub-command of Atlantic Command and Earnshaw the "Military Authority" as stipulated in the Visiting Forces (Commonwealth) Act recently gazetted by the Government of Newfoundland.[69] On 11 November Earnshaw

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[66]PJBD Journal of Discussion and Decisions, Report of Service Members, 14 November 1940, 50218-40. Bridle, Documents, Document 143.

[67]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 16 October 1940.

[68]Earnshaw, commissioned in the Royal Canadian Engineers, had served in France and Flanders with the Canadian Expeditionary Force during World War I where he was mentioned in despatches and awarded the DSO and Military Cross (MC). After the war he attended the Staff College at Camberly, United Kingdom, and held a number of command and staff appointments in the Royal Canadian Signals Corps including command of the Royal Canadian Signals Depot. At the time of his promotion and appointment as Commander W Force he had been the Director of Signals at National Defence Headquarters, a position he held since 1937. (Ottawa Evening Citizen 16 Oct 1940 p. 12)

[69]W Force reached its peak strength in 1943 when the personnel of the formation numbered almost 5,700. By this time it had been upgraded to a Major-General's command and comprised: two infantry battalions located in St. John's and Botwood, two airfield defence companies (one at Gander and one at Torbay); and one Company of the Veterans Guard at St. John's; two Anti-Aircraft Regiments located at St. John's and Gander/Botwood, three coast defence batteries sited at St. John's, Botwood and Lewisporte; a Fortress Company Royal Canadian Engineers; a

arrived in St. John's to take up his duties.[70] In accordance with the Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act negotiated earlier between Newfoundland and Canada, Earnshaw also had under his command those "Military Forces of His Majesty raised in Newfoundland and serving therein" comprising the Newfoundland Militia. This command relationship would later come under question. The Canadian Army in Newfoundland, from the outset, had agreed to provide what assistance it could to the local militia.

Recruiting and training of the Newfoundland Militia began in September 1939 with the arrival in St. John's of Captain C. Fanning-Evans and two NCOs on secondment from the British army. The militia eventually reached a strength of over 500 and was employed guarding vulnerable points around the island and in manning the coast defence battery at Bell Island. It also served as a preparatory training depot for Newfoundlanders who volunteered for the Royal Artillery. When Earnshaw arrived in St. John's the militia was already actively employed. The 1st Coast Defence Battery, formed in August 1940 under the command of Captain D.V. Rainnie, a

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Company of Atlantic Command Signals; and the numerous administrative and support units required to maintain this force. The Commander W Force also had under his command the Newfoundland Regiment which, in addition to a coast defence battery sited on Bell Island, had two infantry companies which carried out various local defence functions. (Stacey, Six Years, p.180)

[70]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 11 November 1940.

Canadian Artillery Officer, was at Bell Island where it manned guns for the protection of the loading docks there. Since the autumn of 1939, the militia had guarded vulnerable points in and around St. John's with sentries posted at the Commercial Cable establishment on Water Street, the Cable Station establishment at Cuckhold's Cove, the St. John's water supply at Windsor Lake, the Newfoundland Broadcast Company radio station at Mount Pearl, the Dockyard and the Imperial Oil Limited storage facilities in the south side of the harbour.[71] In February 1940 the Militia took on the additional job of guarding the internment camp at Pleasantville in the east end of St. John's, the only one to hold enemy aliens. These had either been taken off shipping in Newfoundland ports or were seamen from enemy ships captured at sea.[72]

Lieutenant-Colonel W.F. Rendell, Commanding Officer of the Newfoundland Militia and a veteran of the First World

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[71]E.P. Kendall, "The Newfoundland Regiment" in The Military Gazette, (Vol 60, August 1945) p.7.

[72]In the autumn of 1940 the Newfoundland Government, on behalf of the United Kingdom Government, constructed a Prisoner of War camp at Carbonear, Conception Bay to hold up to 1000 captured German airmen. The PJBD, however, strongly objected to the incarceration of German prisoners in Newfoundland on the ground that this "... would present a serious military hazard which might jeopardize the Defence scheme for Newfoundland which the Board is now preparing and thus menace the safety of Canada and the United States." (Bridle Appx "A" p 1388) The proposal to confine captured German airmen in Newfoundland was therefore cancelled and the camp went unused. In the spring of 1943 it was purchased by Canada for salvage and the facility was dismantled. (WD, NAC, RG24, Vol 13, 812, 14 April 1943)

War's Royal Newfoundland Regiment, called upon Brigadier Earnshaw shortly after his arrival in St. John's to explain his concern about the state of the militia. Rendell was candid, pointing out that the educational standard of the soldiers was very low and that suitable officers were not only difficult to find but of low calibre. Further, since there was no war establishment, each promotion had to be requested and, if approved, there was no replacement in the ranks. The militia, he declared, "is of no use as a force for field action [and] must be totally reorganized before it will be useful for anything other than police guard duty."[73] Earnshaw offered to help by trying to secure vacancies on training courses in Canada. As an immediate measure he initiated a rigorous training programme under the supervision of Major R.S. Leggett, a dental officer with W Force with long experience as an infantry officer with the Toronto Scottish Regiment.[74] Under his direction the militia's performance improved steadily. From time to time, however, misunderstandings between the Newfoundland authorities and the Commander W Force arose. On one such occasion the Chief of Police instructed the adjutant of the Newfoundland Militia to provide personnel for police duties without first referring the matter to W Force Headquarters. Brigadier Earnshaw was quick to point out to Edward Emerson, Commissioner for Justice

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[73]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 18 November 1940.

[74]Ibid., 18 April 1941.

and Defence, that since the Militia came under his command:

> all orders affecting their disposition under the situation as it exists must come from me. The Newfoundland Militia have a place in the defence plan. This plan is now upset by the disposition of a number of the Newfoundland Militia without my knowledge.[75]

The issue was finally resolved when the militia was placed on active service on 10 June 1941. As a further safeguard, however, Brigadier Earnshaw recommended the appointment of a Canadian as Commanding Officer. As there was no suitable Newfoundlander available, Rendell having become Secretary of Defence in October 1941, Newfoundland approved the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel A.T. Howell, a World War I veteran and a long time member of the Royal Montreal Regiment, as Commanding Officer.[76]

As the war progressed and the unit was enlarged the Militia accepted a greater role in the overall defence plan. It provided troops to guard the Main Dam at Deer Lake, the fluorspar mines at St. Lawrence, the Canadian Army's Whitbourne magazine and the cable stations at Bay Roberts and Harbour Grace. In March 1943 the militia attained full regimental status and was redesignated the Newfoundland

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[75]Ibid., 3 January 1941.

[76]Ibid., 7 May 1941.

Regiment. By this time it comprised a headquarters, two infantry companies and a coast defence battery.[77]

The Newfoundland Regiment was not the only Newfoundland unit that served in defence of the island during hostilities. Shortly after the fall of Western Europe in the summer of 1940, the management of the paper mills at Grand Falls and Corner Brook proposed to the government the creation of a volunteer force, to serve without remuneration and outfitted at company expense. In response the government brought in the "Auxiliary Militia Act" authorizing the establishment of auxiliary units of voluntary, unpaid, part-time forces. By the terms of the Act no persons of military age could join unless they were medically unfit for active service, or were holding key positions in industry considered essential to the war effort.[78] The first of these Home Guard Companies was formed at Grand Falls in May 1941. In April of the following year a second unit was organized at Corner Brook. When on parade or undergoing training the Home Guard personnel wore battle dress and were equipped with service rifles. Overall command of the Auxiliary was vested in the Commanding Officer of the Newfoundland Militia. In March 1943, when the Newfoundland Militia was redesignated the Newfoundland Regiment, the Auxiliary Militia assumed the title Newfoundland

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[77]Nicholson, More Newfoundlanders, pp.522-523.

[78]Ibid., p.534.

Militia.[79]

A further concern facing Earnshaw was the need to provide training for civil defence in case of air attacks. Within a month of his arrival in St. John's Brigadier Earnshaw was visited by Mr. C.H. Hutching, Director of the Air Raid Patrol (ARP), to discuss the precautions that were being put into place in case of air attack. Earnshaw promised that he would do whatever he could to assist in organizing and training the ARP.[80] Practice air raid drills, which included blackouts of varying success, were held periodically. Little else was done although the Blitz of Britain had demonstrated fully the horrendous destruction and loss of life that bombing attacks could inflict on urban areas. Military and civilian authorities were also concerned that a marauding warship standing offshore could inflict similar damage by shell fire. Earnshaw responded by directing that the size and efficiency of the ARP organization be increased.[81]

THE ST. JOHN'S GARRISON

As a result of the bilateral defence discussions between Canadian and Newfoundland authorities held in St. John's on 20

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[79]Ibid.

[80]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 11 December 1940.

[81]Nicholson, More Newfoundlanders, p.357.

August 1940, Canada agreed to station an additional infantry battalion, "in or in the vicinity of St. John's."[82] Here as in Botwood intelligence assessed the threat as, "bombardment by a capital ship and/or two 8-in cruisers, by merchant vessels mounting 6-in guns, attack by motor torpedo boats, mine layers and submarines mounting 4.7-in guns, attack by small raiding parties landed from war or merchant vessels; bomb or gas attack by aircraft launched from war vessels, armed merchant vessels or improvised carriers."[83] Canada also promised to inform the Newfoundland Government of any strength increase to its forces in Newfoundland. The Secretary of State for External Affairs therefore duly advised Governor Walwyn on 30 September 1940 that "arrangements are being made to move one Infantry Battalion to St. John's as soon as satisfactory temporary accommodation can be arranged."[84] In reply the Governor pointed out that the only temporary accommodation available in St. John's large enough to house an infantry battalion was Memorial University College, which was already in session. He was willing, however, to shut the institution down and order its evacuation "if your military advisors are satisfied that military necessity justifies such

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[82]Bridle, Documents, Document 184.

[83]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13,807, 31 December 1940.

[84]Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland, 30 September 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 137.

action."[85] King, however, demurred at such a draconian solution. Instead it was decided to proceed post haste with the erection of barracks accommodation, moving the battalion independently by companies as construction progressed.

The unit selected for this assignment was the Victoria Rifles. The battalion advance party under the command of Major R.H. Budden departed Montreal by train on 10 November 1940, arriving in St. John's by the overland route on 14 November. The remainder of the unit travelled by sea in company-size groups and by mid-December Lieutenant Colonel I.H. Eakin and his entire battalion were housed in the newly contructed barracks at Lester's Field on the northwest edge of the capital.[86] Part of its job was mounting sentries at various points around the city such as W Force Headquarters and the Ordnance Depot.[87] In addition to sentry duty the unit provided coast watching detachments at Topsail, Petty Harbour and Portugal Cove. "Stand-to" company was confined to camp with its vehicles loaded and ready to move to reinforce or

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[85]Governor of Newfoundland of Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1 October 1940, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 138.

[86]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 278, November - December 1940.

[87]These sentry and guard duties would continue to be the responsibility of the St. John's garrison battalion until the arrival of a company of the Veterans Guard of Canada in November 1941.

counterattack at any threatened location.[88] The coast watching detachments' task was to observe and/or contain an enemy lodgement pending the arrival of the "Stand-to" company. A duty company provided the camp quarter-guard and fire-picket and supplied the men for fatigues. The remainder of the unit carried out such training as it could. This consisted mainly of lectures and practical training on a multitude of subjects from military law to weapons handling. When possible, tactical exercises were carried out in and around the city to the delight of the local citizenry.[89]

And so as the magnitude of the disaster of the fall of Western Europe dawned, Canada's relations with Newfoundland underwent a fundamental change. Up to this point Newfoundland's security had rested on British seapower but it now became obvious that the island could not be adequately protected by this or any other means at Britain's disposal. This fact drove Canada to a fuller realization of the interdependence of the supremacy of the Royal Navy and the defence of the Western Hemisphere. That realization finally compelled Canada to consider her own protection in a new light and by extension it came to a greater appreciation of the part that Newfoundland must play in Canada's defence. Thus in the

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[88]H.M. Jackson, The Sherbrooke Regiment (27th Armoured Regiment), (Privately Printed: 1958) pp.69-73.

[89]Ibid.

face of a perceived threat to its safety, Canada was forced into a closer relationship with Newfoundland. Self-interest favoured increased involvement in the defence of its neighbour. The two countries were drawn closer together in wartime arrangements whose far-reaching consequences, although not fully appreciated at the time, would forever change the relationship between the two.

CHAPTER III

DEFENDING NEWFOUNDLAND

EXPANDING THE GARRISON

During 1941 Ottawa had not only acknowledged a special responsibility for the defence of its neighbour, it had also taken steps to discharge that responsibility. The American decision to station troops in Newfoundland under the leased bases agreement (first announced in September 1940) challenged the assumption that Newfoundland came within the Canadian sphere. The Canadian military was determined to remain preeminent in the island's defence. To do so would mean that Canada would have to supply additional resources to defend the island. The Chiefs of Staff Committee urged the government to take action. A third battalion of infantry was dispatched and Canada hastened to fulfil its commitment to furnish the promised coast artillery and AA units. Not only did the personnel of W Force increase but the infrastructure expanded greatly through continual construction. In all, approximately 600 permanent and 100 temporary buildings were erected. At the same time training became more rigorous in order to prepare the Canadian soldiers for the much more demanding duty

that awaited them overseas.

INCREASING THE INFANTRY COMPONENT

The first American servicemen arrived in St. John's aboard the troopship Edmund B. Alexander on 29 January 1941.[1] (The vessel had arrived a few days earlier but a severe storm prevented it from negotiating the narrow entrance to the almost land-locked harbour).[2] Under the Leased Bases Agreement the United States constructed three major facilities: Fort Pepperell in Pleasantville near St. John's; Argentia Naval Station on the shores of Placentia Bay; and Harmon Air Field at Stephenville on the west coast of the island. Simply put, the mission and responsibility of the United States army garrison (designated the Newfoundland Base Command) was to defend US installations and, in co-operation with the Canadian forces, to defend Newfoundland against enemy attack.

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[1]Since winter weather handicapped the construction of quarters, this initial force of 58 officers and 919 enlisted men remained quartered aboard the Edmund B. Alexander. In June barracks construction began and the Fort Pepperell Garrison consisting of the 3rd Battalion Infantry, a battery of the 5th Coast Artillery (Harbour Defence) and a battery of the 6th Coast Artillery (Anti-Aircraft) came ashore to stay. (S.W. Dziuban, Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945, [Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1959]) p.96.

[2]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 25 January 1941.

Upon arrival the American commander, Colonel Welty, accompanied by his adjutant and the US Consul, visited Headquarters W Force. The following day Brigadier Earnshaw reciprocated complimenting the American contingent as "fine looking" and "well equipped."[3] From the outset, contact between the Canadian and American army in Newfoundland occurred on an almost daily basis and although they each had their own perception of their duties and responsibilities, relations between the two were surprisingly good. When problems did arise they were more of a political nature and had little effect on relations at the working level. Brigadier Earnshaw and Colonel Welty, who developed a healthy professional respect for each other, had soon worked out an amicable modus operandi. In a letter to his GOCinC on 6 February 1941, Earnshaw was able to report that "on my request he [Colonel Welty] was prepared to put his 155mm mobile battery into action in defence of St. John's harbour and also his AA battery."[4] Further "I could count on his forces being available to take actual part in any defensive action." This, Welty assured Earnshaw, "would not require reference to

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[3]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 30 January 1941.

[4]The Canadian army member of the PJBD had suggested that some coast defence guns, to fill the gap at St. John's until the 10-inch Canadian battery was fully operational, be included in Colonel Welty's contingent. (Dziuban, Military Relations, p.116.)

Washington."[5]

Canadian-American relations were in some respects a unique problem in Newfoundland for, although the Canadian and American peoples had much in common, their military traditions differed greatly. For most of the personnel of W Force it was the first time they had had direct dealings with Americans and while the language used by the Americans was familiar, to the ears of the Canadians, trained as they were in the British Army tradition, it sounded "unmilitary." They were intrigued by US equipment - especially their robust four-wheel drive vehicles and versatile weapons so different from the British designs adopted by the Canadians - yet there was little of the Americans that they envied, certainly not their clothing or their rations.

Military units, however, especially from different nations, are inclined to be critical of one another, particularly when in garrison. They dwell on small points of difference and make much of matters which to a civilian eye seem unimportant - as the entry in the W Force War Diary describing a UN Day Parade in St. John's indicates:

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[5]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 3 February 1941.

> Canadian troops averaged more huskier looking and definitely in better physical condition than the American troops...Canadian steel helmets appeared smooth and shiny while those of the American's [sic]were roughened.[6]

There were occasional fights due to Canadian resentment over higher pay for Americans and the inevitable competition over women. But these were minor problems. In general the Canadian soldier got on reasonably well with his American counterpart. The consensus was that the Americans were good guys and fine soldiers and while the Canadians respected them they also recognized that the Americans had their own way of doing things.

During the same month that the Americans arrived, Brigadier Earnshaw recommended to Atlantic Command the rotation of his infantry battalions to prevent them from becoming "stale" and also to facilitate training.[7] The duties at Gander and Botwood were particularly trying. Not only was the unit split between the two locations but at each the task required a large number of round-the-clock guards that severely restricted unit training. In St. John's, on the other hand, the duties were less onerous and since the unit was concentrated in one camp, training was more easily

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[6]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 808, 14 June 1942.

[7]Ibid., 27 January 1941.

handled. Morale also suffered in the smaller communities while in St. John's the soldiers had access to a bustling seaport and all that it had to offer in the way of entertainment.[8] At Earnshaw's suggestion the change-overs were to take place in early April, "to enable me to get the reliefs completed before navigation opens."[9] Consequently in April the Victoria Rifles were transferred to Gander/Botwood area and the Royal Rifles moved to St. John's. It was not to last long, however, for by August the Royal Rifles were on the move again, this time to Camp Valcartier, Quebec.[10]

Both the Chiefs of Staff and the Cabinet were resolved to maintain Canada's preminence in defence matters in Newfoundland. The fact was underscored in a meeting of the War Cabinet Committee held on 5 June 1941. During the meeting

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[8]Ibid.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Their stay in Valcartier did not, unfortunately, last long either. The Royal Rifles of Canada would be one of the two Canadian infantry battalions posted to Hong Kong. In an ironic twist of fate it was nominated for this duty because the Director of Military Training felt that the unit was not ready for operational employment. The Chief of the General Staff, on the other hand, disagreed. In his opinion, the duty to be performed in Hong Kong would be quite similar to that performed in Newfoundland and not only would the Newfoundland tour be of great value but it had proven the units efficiency! When Hong Kong fell on Christmas Day 1941 the entire unit was either killed or captured by the Japanese. (Stacey, Six Years, pp. 442-444)

the Chief of the General Staff, Major-General Crerar, pointed out that the protective measures recommended for the defence of Gander airfield were based on a joint reconnaissance carried out by the senior Canadian and American officers in Newfoundland.[11] (Brigadier Earnshaw and Colonel Welty travelled to Gander by train in April 1941 and prepared a joint "military appreciation of the situation"). Up to this point the infantry duties of Gander/Botwood had been carried out by positioning two rifle companies, plus supporting troops, in each location. In their assessment, however, Earnshaw and Welty deemed that the substantial increase in military air traffic and the imminent deployment of AA and coast artillery in the area fully justified additional infantry troops, whose main role was now local ground protection and security. Crerar was of the opinion that if Canada was not prepared to provide these additional troops, the United States would send forces of their own. In view of the Canadian policy regarding the defence of the island, this would be unfortunate. He therefore recommended the dispatch of an additional infantry battalion to Newfoundland. Prime Minister King agreed that every effort necessary should be taken to "keep Newfoundland within the Canadian orbit."[12] The

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[11]Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet Committee, Ottawa, 5 June 1941, CWC, Bridle, Documents, Document 102.

[12]Ibid.

Committee therefore approved an additional infantry battalion for employment in Newfoundland and in July the Prince Edward Island Highlanders (PEIH) headed for Newfoundland.

The Highlanders had been mobilized for Active Service immediately upon the outbreak of war in September 1939. Within two weeks the battalion was on duty guarding vulnerable points in the Halifax/Dartmouth area of Nova Scotia. In May 1941 it moved to Camp Valcartier for unit training. July saw the unit advance party on its way to Newfoundland by the overland route, followed by the main body which travelled by ship. By the end of July Lieutenant Colonel C.C. Thompson had taken command of the Botwood Defences from the Victoria Rifles.[13]

The PEIH was the first battalion to be posted to Botwood intact. The strength of the Canadian military establishment in Botwood had already increased considerably over the past year and with it the infantry's defence and security role. The guard company now furnished infantry protection to the 106th Coast Battery Royal Canadian Artillery (RCA), situated at Phillips Head and Wisemans Head further up the Bay of Exploits, and out-post detachments at Point Leamington to the

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[13]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 147, 26 July 1941.

northwest, Lewisporte to the northeast, Bishop's Falls to the south and Notre Dame Junction to the east. The stand-by company was on immediate call ready to reinforce or counter-attack wherever required. A third company acted as duty company performing fatigues and routine tasks around the camp. The fourth company trained. Headquarters, the specialist company, provided local protection within Botwood itself and mounted mobile support weapons patrols. In order to provide some variety and to ensure that the troops did not become too bored, company tasks were rotated every two weeks.[14] This helped bolster morale. In March 1942 the unit was relieved by the Algonquin Regiment from St. John's and moved to Gander to replace the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. Their stay in Gander would last one full year.

Gander underwent a major expansion in 1940-41. The arrival of the US Army Air Corps increased day-to-day operations while the number of ferried aircraft increased exponentially. This in turn resulted in a corresponding increase in the numbers of infantry required for protection and security. The enormous size of the base, the largest in the Commonwealth, required a minimum of three companies to man the defensive positions, furnish local protection for the AA

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[14]Ibid., July-August 1941.

batteries, and provide security for base facilities such as hangars, fuel tanks and the like. Another company provided personnel for camp fatigues and provided a detachment at Gambo to the southeast whose task it was to keep Freshwater and Indian Bays under observation. Headquarters Company mounted mobile patrols and was ready to deploy its support weapons in an emergency.[15]

Thus, as the autumn of 1941 approached, Brigadier Earnshaw's command had expanded considerably from the infantry battalion and coast battery he had inherited less than a year before. His Headquarters at "Winterholm" in St. John's was larger than that of a brigade with a command signals detachment. Later it expanded to include a company of the Veterans Guard of Canada for security. The Royal Rifles, employed basically as a counter-attack/counter-penetration force for St. John's and the coast to the south as well as the east coast of Conception Bay, was housed at Lester's Field Barracks. The Newfoundland Militia, headquartered at Shamrock Field Barracks in the capital, manned the coast defence guns at Bell Island and guarded vulnerable points in and around the city. There were two more infantry battalions, the Victoria Rifles at Gander and the PEIH at Botwood. In addition to

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[15]R.L. Rogers, History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, (Privately Published: 1954) pp.105-107.

their primary duty of securing these defence facilities they manned detachments at such places as Lewisporte, Notre Dame Junction, Indian Bay and Gambo to secure the land approaches. At all locations, of course, there were the necessary ancillary service, ordnance, engineer, medical corps personnel and the like who supported the infantry.

As both the Canadian and American military presence continued to expand during 1941 some friction developed between the local commanders. And so Canada, for reasons which will be explained in greater detail later, decided to up-grade the rank of the Commander W Force. In December 1941 the Minister of National Defence announced the appointment of Major-General L.F. Page as General Officer Commanding (GOC) W Force.[16] Soon after his arrival Page visited each unit to

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[16]At the outbreak of war in 1914 Major-General Page went overseas as a subaltern with the 5th Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force. In 1917 he was appointed Commanding Officer of the 50th Battalion in which capacity he served with distinction until the Armistice, having been mentioned in despatches five times and awarded the DSO and bar. On return to Canada he joined the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians). A number of command and staff appointments followed, culminating in his promotion to Brigadier and appointment as Commander of Military District 7 in 1937. In June 1940 Page went to Iceland as Commander Canadian Forces and in November of the same year he was transferred to the United Kingdom as Commander Canadian Base Units. Nine months later he returned to Canada to command 4 Armoured Division where he remained until his posting as General Officer Commanding W Force. St. John's Daily News (29 December 1941) p.3.

conduct a thorough staff inspection. Page was generally pleased with what he found but was dissatisfied with the standard of tactical training of the Newfoundland garrison. He had stipulated that all infantry battalions must be battle ready, but on his tours of inspection he saw that this was not the case. The problem was the infantry's duties such as guards, sentries and coast-watching. This allowed time for individual training but junior officers failed to gain proper leadership training, a concern which Page raised in a letter to his infantry battalion commanders on 18 February 1942. Based on reports received on officers attending courses at training establishments in Canada, it was apparent that "their performance indicates a dangerously low standard of training, a most unsatisfactory and disquietening state of affairs."[17] Some officers had even been returned from training courses because of insufficient preparatory training. More serious, officers were appallingly weak in their knowledge of military organization and basic infantry tactics. "If this were the case," Page concluded, "it is difficult to visualize how the unit, as a whole, can be properly trained."[18]

To correct this state of affairs he ordered special

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[17]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 18 February 1942.

[18]Ibid.

training classes to begin immediately. All officers below the rank of major were to attend. To avoid interfering with normal day-to-day training, instruction was to be "in the evening or late afternoon or over the weekend."[19] In addition to a certain required number of classroom lectures, instruction was to "consist principally of field exercises and demonstrations." Equipped as private soldiers, officers were organized in sections and acted as such in the field.[20] Courses were to be of six weeks' duration with weekly reports submitted to Headquarters. Page suggested that commanding officers and company commanders should monitor these courses since they were responsible for the training of their junior officers and "should take an active interest in order to ensure that these courses produce the results required." Finally, "while courses were underway leave and off-duty passes were to be subordinated to the requirements of training."[21]

Page's remedial training programme was well timed. No sooner had the junior officers honed their tactical skills than infantry field training received a new and realistic

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[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

[21]Ibid.

stimulus prompted by the return of a handful of officers and NCO's who had been sent to the United Kingdom for advanced training. They introduced W Force to a British Army innovation - "Battle Drill." Battle Drill was based on the theory that in combat most difficulty stemmed from the unfamiliarity of junior commanders with the noise and confusion of battle. To overcome this, at least in part, every soldier had to learn to execute a few routine tactical manoeuvres by habit so that eventually fire and movement on the battlefield would become automatic to the infantryman and his section. To this end, Battle Drill called for the firing of live ammunition over the heads of manoeuvring troops as they crawled under barbed wire and negotiated obstacles to the constant chant of their instructors DOWN! CRAWL! OBSERVE! FIRE! Later in the war many higher commanders questioned Battle Drill's effectiveness. There is little doubt that many of its promoters had overdone and oversimplified the benefits to be gained from it, but as a catalyst to training and as a vehicle for toughening troops under realistic conditions it proved invaluable.

DEVELOPMENT OF FIXED COASTAL DEFENCES

Unlike the decade prior to World War I, planning in Canada for coast defence during the 1930s was well advanced.

By 1936 the armaments required for coastal defence were based on the scales of attack projected by the military intelligence community. Unfortunately, the arrangement for defending Canada's coastline was dependent on substantial construction and the manufacture and purchase of new ordnance and was not expected to be in place until 1943 or 1944. With the outbreak of war in 1939, therefore, improvisation became the watch-word and ordnance, no matter of what nature or age, had to be utilized. In short, any equipment that could be adapted for use in the coast defence role was pressed into service. This serious shortage of modern equipment was to play a major role in the tardiness of providing proper coast defence for Newfoundland.[22]

Generally speaking the requirements in armaments and their disposition at a defended port followed a common pattern. Against an 8-inch cruiser standing off-shore and bombarding the port a gun in the eight to 10-inch class that could fire at extreme ranges presented the best deterrence. Sited in pairs these guns constituted the counter-bombardment (CB) batteries, the first line in any coast defence organization. Supporting the long range guns were the guns of the close defence (CD) batteries which were sited nearer the

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[22]Nicholson, Gunners, pp.447-448.

harbour to be defended. Their main role was to engage any enemy shipping which managed to evade the outer defences. The third and inner line of defence comprised the anti-motor torpedo boat (AMTB) batteries normally positioned within the port. Thus the CB, CD, and AMTB batteries comprised the basic defence of a defended port. Super-imposed upon this organization were the AA batteries, the naval examination service, the port war signals sections and the infantry defence and employment troops. Additionally, the Navy and the Air Force were responsible for reconnaissance and observation beyond the outer perimeter of the port's defences. An army artillery officer invariably commanded the defended port.[23]

As early as its first meeting in Ottawa in August 1940 the PJBD recommended that, given Newfoundland's strategic position, coast artillery defence should be established on the island and put in place by the spring of 1941. Canada would take responsibility for construction and manning of the batteries while the United States would help with the provision of ordnance.[24]

In the summer of 1940 there was only one operational

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[23]Ibid., pp.448-449.

[24]Ibid., p.464.

battery in Newfoundland. The 1st Coast Defence Battery of the Newfoundland Militia consisted of two 4.7-inch guns and two searchlights used for the protection of the iron ore mines and shipping facilities at Bell Island.[25] St. John's, the capital and the island's most important port, was without protection. Consequently it was decided that until a proper defended port organization could be put in place and as a stop-gap measure, a makeshift battery, "Q" Battery, should be dispatched to St. John's.[26] The organization of "Q" Battery RCA under Captain R.R. Ward took place at Royal Artillery Park in Halifax during the first three weeks of October. Personnel were drawn from the 1st Halifax Coast Brigade RCA, 3RD (NB) Coast Brigade RCA, 16th Coast Brigade RCA and from Military District NO.6 RCA establishment.[27] Equipped with 75mm guns it acted as an Examination Battery.[28] On 5 November 1940 guns were installed temporarily at Fort Amherst, a hastily prepared position consisting of gun emplacements and barracks accommodation

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[25]The Quick Firing (QF) 4.7 inch gun on its field mounting was utilized in close defence during the early years of the war. The field mountings were gradually replaced by locally made pedestals and the performance of the gun was improved by other refinements though the deterrent value remained doubtful. Nicholson, Gunners, p.449.

[26]Ibid., p.464.

[27]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 356, 1-18 October 1940.

[28]Ibid. These weapons were British pattern, French type, 75 millimetre guns with standard mountings manufactured in the United States in 1917.

perched on a rocky promontory at the south entrance to the harbour and surrounded on three sides by the sea.[29] In May 1941 these guns were moved across the harbour entrance to the newly constructed Fort Chain Rock and "Q" Battery was redesignated "C" Troop, 103rd Coast Battery RCA.

In a dispatch on 13 May 1941 the Secretary of State for External Affairs informed Governor Walwyn of the Canadian Army's plans to install new fixed coast defence and AA defence in the St. John's area.[30] The coast artillery positions would be manned by the 103rd Coast Battery, RCA (formerly the 103rd Heavy Battery RCA) under Major D.V. Rainnie.[31] The 103rd Battery was to occupy three "forts" in the St. John's area. "A" Troop was stationed at Fort Cape Spear, on the most easterly point in North America, manning two American 10-inch guns.[32] These guns would provide counter-bombardment against enemy warships carrying large calibre guns standing off shore. Fort Cape Spear's exposed position, which gave it a 7,000-yard

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[29]Ibid., 5 November 1941.

[30]Secretary of State for External Affairs to Governor of Newfoundland, Ottawa, 13 May 1941, 1156-D-39. Bridle, Documents, Document 633.

[31]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 372, 17 May 1941.

[32]The American 10-inch coast gun, 1888 model, mounted on a disappearing carriage, was capable of firing a 617 pound projectile some 17,000 yards. Its weight with mounting was thirty tons. Nicholson, Gunners, p.449.

advantage over any hostile vessel approaching St. John's, also required an infantry detachment from the St. John's garrison battalion to provide local protection against a possible enemy raiding party. "B" Troop occupied Fort Amherst at the south entrance of the harbour. It was equipped with two 4.7-inch guns combining a close defence role with that of an Examination Battery. "C" Troop was installed in Fort Chain Rock at the northern entrance to the harbour where its two 75mm guns gave protection against submarines and surface craft that might elude the outer defence. In support of this role the troop was also equipped with two 60-inch searchlights."

The ordnance for "A" Troop arrived in St. John's by ship from the United States on 24 April 1941 and was immediately placed in storage at the Furness Withy dock until construction was completed at Cape Spear.[34] The reinforced concrete positions, dug into the cliff face, and the necessary barracks accommodations and ancillary buildings were not ready until late summer. In October the dismantled guns were moved on borrowed American equipment with great difficulty over the narrow dirt track that served as the only road connection between St. John's and Cape Spear. Once the guns were

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[33]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 372, 15 May-15 August 1941.

[34]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 24 April 1941.

installed, intensive training was carried out using a 1.457-inch sub-calibre device. Final calibration took place during the first week of December 1941 and on the 9th the first practice shoot was held.[35] To help disguise its actual location the position was cleverly camouflaged and a "dummy position", which it was hoped would draw enemy fire, was located on a more prominent ridge some distance away.[36]

While these fixed coast artillery positions were being prepared in the St. John's area, work had already begun on similar positions in the Botwood area to provide protection for the busy port and seaplane base and the sea approaches to Gander airfield. During the summer of 1941 men of the 106th Coast Battery RCA (formerly 106th Heavy Battery) under Major C.J. MacDonald arrived from the Halifax Fortress. The fixed coast defences of the Botwood Defended Area consisted of two troop positions facing each other diagonally across the Bay of Exploits. At Wisemens Head "A" Troop was equipped with two American 10-inch guns while at Phillips Head "B" Troop manned two 4.7-inch guns. "D" Troop manned the supporting searchlights.[37] Local protection was provided by Botwood

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[35]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 372, 9 December 1941.

[36]Ibid., 4 April 1942.

[37]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 374, 11 July-18 September 1941.

infantry battalion. In May 1942 the 107th Coast Battery RCA (formerly the 107th Heavy Battery) under Major R. Sinclair, recently reorganized and equipped with two 75mm guns and two 60-inch searchlights,[38] left Halifax for Lewisporte, where its role would be to guard against submarines and light surface craft.[39] A platoon from the Botwood infantry battalion provided local protection.

Given the situation, at least in the early war period, the greatest fear was the threat of enemy surface raiders which, in addition to their powerful ordnance, might carry assault parties. The report of an allied encounter with a German raider off Bermuda on 25 November 1940 elicited an immediate response by W Force Headquarters. Realizing that the same vessel could be off Newfoundland by the evening of 26 November the Victoria Rifles were placed on general alert "in case St. John's was raided or shelled," a threat never far from Brigadier Earnshaw's mind.[40] Soon after his arrival he had determined that the coast artillery, which at this time comprised only one battery of 75 mm guns, was insufficient to prevent the shelling of St. John's by any capital ship

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[38]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 377, 26 January 1942.

[39]Ibid., 24 May 1942.

[40]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 25 November 1940.

standing out of range of shore defences. On 1 January 1941 he wired the GOCinC Atlantic Command:

> Officials here agree St. John's dangerously open to attack by raider or specially fitted cargo boat [sic]. Harbour full of ships which could, if sunk, render it useless. If possible bombers placed here on Quidi Vidi Lake as temporary measure and coast batteries rushed.[41]

Since nothing was available the GOCinC responded that the "risk must be accepted for the present."[42] Earnshaw's fears were, however fully justified. In early 1941 German surface raiders, in greater strength than ever before, penetrated further into the Northwest Atlantic. The pocket battleship Admiral Scheer and the heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper were on the loose in the North Atlantic and they were soon joined by the Bismarck and Prince Eugen. In one two-day period in mid-March the powerful battle-cruisers Scharnhorst and Gneisenau sank sixteen ships bound for the United Kingdom within four or five hundred miles of St. John's. At the same time the submarine menace was also mounting. In March U-boat operations were extended a further six hundred miles out to

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[41]Ibid., 1 January 1941.

[42]Ibid., 9 January 1941.

sea - as far west as 40 degrees.[43] The Kriegsmarine, however did not confine its attentions to merchantmen alone. One can, therefore, appreciate the consternation occasioned by the news of the sinking off Greenland on 24 May 1941 of HMS Hood, which immediately resulted in a rumour that Greenland had been occupied by the enemy.[44] Worse yet, Bismarck, flushed with her victory over the Hood, was reported 95 miles off St. John's! As a precaution a black-out was imposed on the city and the adjacent coastline and all military and naval units were placed on full alert.[45] However, the first confirmed sighting, for W Force at least, came on 29 October 1941, when Lieutenant E.P. Hall of the Sherbrooke Fusiliers attached to 103rd Battery, RCA, at Fort Amherst on look-out duty relayed to W Force Headquarters the sighting of an enemy submarine by a Royal Canadian Navy destroyer.[46]

German raiders ceased to be a serious threat after 1941 but U-boat wolf packs lurking in waters off Newfoundland remained a threat for much of the war, sometimes sallying

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[43]Douglas G. Anglin, The St. Pierre and Miquelon Affair of 1941, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) p.p. 50-51.

[44]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 278, 24 May 1941.

[45]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 25 May 1941.

[46]Jackson, Sherbrooke Regiment, p.68.

close to shore. Enemy submarine sightings, mostly mistaken, were common around the island. Many of these fanciful encounters originated with fishermen and other small craft owners but coast watchers were just as imaginative. These reports gained some credence in the spring of 1942 when mines began to appear off the east coast of the island. Believed at first to be evidence of enemy activity, they proved in the end to be of British design. Further investigation determined that they had originated in European fields laid by the Royal Navy. Having slipped their moorings they had, unfortunately, drifted across the Atlantic - poor consolation for any Allied vessel unlucky enough to strike one![47]

Not all reports of enemy activity were exaggerated, as the men of B Troop, 103rd Coast Battery learned on 3 March 1942. At 1415 hours the sealing vessel Terra Nova, having been cleared by port signals and the Examination Battery, steamed through the Narrows and entered the harbour. At 1454 hours a violent explosion shook Fort Amherst, throwing up a pillar of water 100 feet high directly in front of No.1 gun position. Two minutes later there was a second powerful explosion at North Head on the opposite shore. In the immediate aftermath there was some conjecture as to what the

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[47]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 23 April 1942.

cause of the explosions had been - mines, shells or torpedoes. However, it was soon agreed that an enemy submarine had attempted to block the harbour entrance by sinking Terra Nova as she entered. This theory was confirmed the following day when metal fragments identified as pieces of a torpedo warhead were recovered from the shoreline.[48]

Further northeast in Notre Dame Bay the following month, Private Liscombe of the Algonquin Regiment and his section on sentry duty in the Point Leamington area were astonished, just after dawn as the fog lifted, by a German U-boat surfaced in the calm waters of Southwest Arm with the crew on deck in full view. Since the observation post was without communications, Liscombe had to make his way to Headquarters on foot to give the alarm. By the time heavy weapons could be brought to the scene the boat had disappeared. The incident, however, served to put everyone on alert and Liscombe was commended for his swift action.[49]

For most of the time coast gunners stationed in Newfoundland were caught up in the necessary but boring tasks that differed little from what they had been doing in Canada.

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[48]Ibid., 4 March 1942.

[49]C.L. Cassidy, Warpath: The Story of the Algonquin Regiment 1939-1945, (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1948) p.41.

For young volunteers hankering for action, the progress of the war to that point seemed to offer little excitement and certainly no immediate prospect of overseas duty. But during wartime, things could change quickly. A lazy summer day could erupt into a nightmare, as happened in Lewisporte on 25 June 1942. On that day a store of dynamite, belonging to a civilian defence contractor but stored temporarily in the 107th Coast Battery tented camp, accidently exploded. Five soldiers were killed outright and eleven injured. A number of nearby buildings were damaged while thirty bell tents and two marquees were torn to shreds. A portion of the staff of Botwood Military hospital was promptly rushed to Lewisporte where the swift application of their medical skill was instrumental in saving the lives of the seriously injured. Their efforts did not go unnoticed as they were all subsequently commended.[50] Three officers were ultimately charged with negligence, although the court martial cleared them of any blame in the tragedy.[51]

While service-related accidents claimed both military and civilian lives in Newfoundland throughout the war, far more were lost from direct enemy U-boat action. Such was the case

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[50]Ibid., p.36.

[51]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 2 August 1942.

when the long and lonely vigil of the Newfoundland personnel of 1 CD Battery at Bell Island was dramatically broken on 5 September 1942. Captain O'Driscoll and his men had spotted what they thought were enemy U-boats before, passing the information on to the RCN. During the previous May they had actually engaged a suspected target although no debris was sighted. On the day in question, however, four freighters, having loaded ore, were lying-to awaiting orders for their outgoing convoy. At midday, without warning, the British freighter Saganaga was struck by two torpedoes and in less than a minute went down with twenty-seven of her crew. Within minutes the Canadian freighter Lord Strathcona was also sunk, fortunately without loss of life as her crew had already abandoned ship. The men of 1 CD Battery, having alerted Headquarters W Force, manned their guns in search of a target while the infantry detachments stood to full alert ready to repulse any attempted landing. A RCN corvette was dispatched immediately from St. John's and mobile AA guns were rushed by road to Conception Bay.[52] The Newfoundland battery engaged what it thought was the U-boat but no damage seems to have been done.[53] In reporting the action to Headquarters Atlantic

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[52]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 809, 5 September 1942.

[53]After the war German records confirmed that the attack was carried out by U-513 commanded by Korvetten Käpitan Rolf Ruggeburg. Herb Wells, Under the White Ensign: A History of the Naval Seamen of Newfoundland in the Second World War (St.

Command Major-General Page paid tribute to the Newfoundlanders, stating that they had "behaved in a most exemplary manner during the course of these operations."[54]

But the daring U-boat commanders did not confine their action to naval and merchant shipping in the relatively open and easily accessible waters of the east and northeast coasts of Newfoundland. The single greatest event resulting in the loss of life to both Canadian service personnel and Newfoundland civilians in the waters surrounding Newfoundland during the World War II was the result of enemy action in the Cabot Strait. In the early hours of 15 October 1942 the Newfoundland-Nova Scotia steamship ferry Caribou was torpedoed as she was nearing the end of her overnight run from North Sydney to Port Aux Basques.[55] Struck amidships, the vessel sank within a few minutes in what was described as "the

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John's: Robinson Blackmore Printing and Publishing Ltd, 1981) Also for a fuller description of the incident see Steve Neary, The Enemy at our Doorstep, (St. John's: Jesperson Press Ltd., 1994)

[54]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 7 September 1942.

[55]After the war German records confirmed that the attack was carried out by U-69 commanded by Käpitan-Lieutenant Ulrich Graf. Wells, White Ensign. For a full description of the tragic incident see Douglas How, Night of the Caribou, (Hansport, Nova Scotia: Lancelot Press, 1988) also see Howard Yorke, "A Saga of the Caribou" in Nova Scotia Historicial Review (Vol 5, No.1, 1985) pp. 31-36, for a survivor's reminiscence of the event.

greatest maritime disaster in the coastal waters fringing Canada announced to date [during the war]."[56]

The first rescue craft on the scene was the Caribou's escort vessel Grandmere, an RCN Bangor Class minesweeper which managed to pick up 103 survivors. Immediately the news was received that the ferry had been attacked and sunk, Grandmere was joined by schooners and boats from Newfoundland ports. They in turn were shortly joined by naval vessels from Sydney. In spite of these efforts the toll was considerable. Out of a total of 137 listed as missing and presumed dead fifty-seven were Canadian service personnel from the three branches.[57] Among the missing were fourteen Newfoundlanders on home leave from the Royal Navy. The newspaper concluded its account of the tragedy by stating that "initial reports of the submarine surfacing and machine gunning survivors proved false."[58]

Again, at the Bell Island ore docks in the early morning hours of 2 November, just a little short of two months after

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[56]Daily News, St. John's, 17 October 1942. p.1.

[57]Yorke, "A Saga," p.35. Among them was Lieutenant Agnes Wilkie, Assistant Matron of the Naval Hospital at St. John's, "the first Nursing Sister of the Royal Canadian Navy to make the supreme sacrifice." (Daily News St. John's 17 October 1942) p.1.

[58]Ibid.

the sinking of Saganaga and Lord Strathcona, two more freighters, SS Rosecastle and the Free French ship PLM-27, met the same fate. Visibility was poor in rain and fog as the enemy U-boat manoeuvred into position.[59] It first engaged the ore carrier SS Flyingdale which was loading at the Scotia Pier but the torpedo ran under the stern and struck the pier instead, causing extensive damage. Two more torpedoes followed, sending Rosecastle to the bottom with a loss of twenty-eight crewman.[60] The enemy then turned to starboard to sink PLM-27 with a loss of twelve lives.[61] Although the entire action took place on the surface, the siting of 1 CD Battery in relation to the angle of approach of the U-boat prevented any accurate counter-bombardment and the enemy was able to escape to the safety of deeper water without being effectively engaged. The after action report attributed no blame to 1 CD Battery.[62]

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[59]After the war German records confirmed that the attack was carried out by U-518 commanded by Korvetten Kapitan Friedrich Wissmann. Wells, White Ensign. See again Neary, The Enemy.

[60]The ship's bell of the Rosecastle was recovered and currently hangs in the Royal Canadian Legion, Bell Island as a grim reminder of this turbulent period in the history of the community.

[61]Plans are now underway to erect a suitable memorial near Lance Cove Beach to commemorate the loss of the merchant seaman who died as a result of the enemy attacks carried out on 5 September and 2 November 1942.

[62]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 809, 4 November 1942.

Thus we can see that while the threat from enemy surface ships, which intelligence staffs envisioned early on, never materialized, successful enemy U-boat action accounted for tragic losses of shipping and lives in Newfoundland waters.[63] Coast defence batteries were positioned at what defence planners had assessed as the most important and therefore most vulnerable points around the island. That these batteries never successfully engaged the enemy cannot be attributed to any failing on the part of the gun crews. They stood their long lonely vigil and were ready to engage and, they hoped destroy any enemy who chanced into their gunsights. The very fact that St. John's, Botwood and Lewisporte were defended by coast guns may well have provided the deterrence that ensured their safety.

ANTI-AIRCRAFT DEFENCE PROGRAMME

The outbreak of war had found Canada with virtually no effective AA armament. In 1938 a Joint Staff Sub-Committee on Anti-Aircraft Defence had assessed the possible forms and scales of air attack on Canada. Based on its report, orders

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[63]For a fuller appreciation of German U-boat activities in Newfoundland and Canadian waters in World War II see Michael L. Hadley, U-Boats Against Canada: German Submarines in Canadian Waters, (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

were placed in England for guns and ancillary equipment such as searchlights and sound locators. When the war broke out in September 1939, the British War Office notified Ottawa that it could no longer promise delivery of what had been ordered. Equipment was available from United States sources but the Canadians were reluctant to abandon British standards and so it was decided to manufacture the required equipment in Canada.[64] Unfortunately, the Canadian armaments industry could not promise delivery of the guns by the spring of 1941, which was the deadline set for their deployment by the PJBD. The United States offered to take responsibility for AA defence at both St. John's and Gander but Canada's reluctance to lose control over ground defence, which has already been noted, caused this offer to be politely refused. Instead it was decided to borrow the required equipment from the United States Army.[65]

A light anti-aircraft (LAA) battery, the 16th LAA, was hastily formed from artillery personnel in Military Districts

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[64]Nicholson, Gunners, pp.481-483.

[65]The initial United States Army garrison in Newfoundland included an AA battery. At Canada's request the equipment of this battery was augmented by the balance of the equipment of an AA regiment. The equipment, which consisted of heavy anti-aircraft guns, .50 calibre machine guns, searchlights, sound locators, ammunition and other ancillary equipment, was loaned to the Canadians "for training." Dziuban, Military Relations, p.93.

No 6. and 7.[66] Arriving in St. John's in the spring of 1941 it was equipped with .50 calibre Colt AA machine guns supplied by the United States Army. After a brief training period under the supervision of American artillerymen the 16th LAA (MG) Battery deployed three AA troops of four guns each at Gander while Battery Headquarters, two AA troops and a searchlight troop took up positions in and around St. John's.[67] In the summer of 1942 the American .50 calibers were replaced by Canadian-built 40 mm Bofors. 16th LAA (MG) Battery was disbanded with the bulk of its personnel absorbed into the newly formed batteries arriving from Canada.[68]

The arrival of the 16th LAA (MG) Battery in Newfoundland had been followed in turn by a heavy anti-aircraft (HAA) battery. The 7th HAA Battery arrived in St. John's from the York Redoubt on 19 August 1941 and manned four 3-inch heavy AA guns that were also borrowed from the Americans. Upon landing the unit went "under canvas" at Kilbride just west of St. John's and commenced training with the assistance of American artillerymen at Signal Hill.[69] It completed its training in

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[66]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 2 March 1941.

[67]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 517, 1 May-15 June 1941.

[68]Ibid., 15 November 1942.

[69]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 512, 19 August-15 October 1941.

mid-December and moved to Gander via a special train hauling five flatcars carrying the four guns, equipment and general stores. On December 28, 1941 the 7th HAA Battery was incorporated within the Gander defence sector and classified "ready for action."[70] Four British Ordnance 3.7-inch mobile heavy AA guns (manufactured in Canada) replaced the American ordnance in July 1942.[71] On October 29, 1943 the 7th HAA Battery turned over its equipment and sites to the 17th HAA Battery, a French-speaking unit, and departed for Halifax.[72]

By the end of 1941, Canadian manufacturing plants had completed their tooling and in the early months of 1942 AA guns were rolling off the assembly lines in Canada in ever increasing numbers. Occasionally equipment became available before there were units ready to accept it. The number of AA batteries authorized increased dramatically in Atlantic Command alone from five to thirty-seven.[73]

One of the first of the new units formed in Atlantic Command was the 5th LAA Battery. Authorized on 19 January

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[70]Ibid., 28 December 1941.

[71]Ibid., 22 July 1942.

[72]Ibid., 29 October 1943.

[73]Nicholson, Gunners, p.485.

1942, it was equipped with 40 mm Bofors and commenced training at Debert Camp, Nova Scotia. It arrived in Gander in late March 1942 to take up positions as part of that airfield's defences. On 1 September 1943 the 5th was re-designated the 105th and later that fall it became a French - speaking unit as the English-speaking personnel departed for Canada and reassignment and were replaced with gunners from Quebec.[74]

It soon became obvious that in order to standardize training and facilitate command and control, the formerly independent AA batteries should be grouped under regimental control. In line with this reorganization two AA regiments were authorized for Newfoundland - the 25th AA Regiment in the St. John's/Torbay/Bell Island area and the 26th AA Regiment in the Gander/Botwood/Lewisporte area.[75]

The 25th AA Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel C.V. Harris, who had formerly commanded the Shelburne Defences, was authorized on 1 May 1942 and placed in active service 1 June 1942.[76] During June/July two new batteries, supplied with the latest equipment arrived in St. John's. On

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[74]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 582, 19 January 1942-15 November 1943.

[75]Nicholson, Gunners, p.486.

[76]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 492, 1 May-15 June 1942.

1 October 1942 the 14th HAA Battery, under Captain E.D. Murray, equipped with 3.7-inch guns occupying positions at Torbay airfield and the 27th LAA Battery, under the Command of Major R.C. Zink manning 40 mm Bofors at the airfield and at various points around St. John's, were classified "ready for action."[77] These two original batteries were later joined by three more: the 54th HAA Battery (redesignated the 154th in October 1943); and the 48th (redesignated 148th October 1943); and 55th LAA Battery (which manned AA defenses on Bell Island). The five batteries of the regiment were controlled by No. 5 Gun Operations Room (GOR). At the same time, similar activity was taking place in Gander as the 26th AA Regiment took shape. The 7th HAA Battery and the 5th LAA Battery, already in place, formed the nucleus of the new unit command by Lieutenant Colonel I.B. MacCallum. These existing batteries were joined during October/November by the 56th HAA Battery, and the 57th LAA Battery. The fire of the regiment was controlled by No. 4 GOR. In July 1943 the regiment was further expanded with the arrival of the 28th LAA Battery, stationed in Botwood and the 29th LAA Troop stationed in Lewisporte.[78] The composition of these AA regiments did not remain constant and from time to time relieving batteries were

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[77]Ibid., 1 October 1942.

[78]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 493, October 1942 - December 1943.

brought in from other parts of Atlantic Command. For example, the 14th HAA and the 27th LAA Batteries which were posted to St. John's in June 1942 were replaced by the 49th HAA and the 24th LAA Batteries in March 1944. As well, command of the unit changed hand when Lieutenant Colonel Harris was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel R.F. Cappel.[79]

The officer commanding an AA regiment was the technical advisor to the officer commanding the Defended Port on all AA matters. When his guns were put into action, the officer commanding would direct the fire of his batteries from his GOR, the nerve centre of the AA defence. In addition to his own resources, information for the direction of fire was also provided by the airforce, the navy and the Fire Command Post of the coast artillery.[80] Alerts were called at irregular intervals to test the efficiency of the AA defences and since the five batteries of the 25th AA Regiment had been classified "ready for action" and incorporated within the St. John's defence, an alert was called on the night of 10 December 1942. In a subsequent meeting among all three Canadian services and the American forces called to review the event, it was discovered that there were seven different aircraft

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[79]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 492, 15 September 1944.

[80]Nicholson, Gunners, pp.486-487.

interdiction systems then in use in Newfoundland![81] The GOC immediately instituted inter-service AA defence training and directed that the GOR, which had been manned on a daily rotational basis since it had opened in September, would be manned by permanently assigned personnel. Consequently, on 19 December No. 5 GOR opened at Torbay with three officers and 10 other ranks on permanent staff.[82]

We may well ask today why Newfoundland rated such large amounts of AA artillery. Yet Newfoundland was not unique in this respect. Throughout all of Atlantic Command, as ordnance rolled off the production lines, increasing numbers of AA batteries were deployed at ports, defence installations and other sensitive sites. The main reason for this was the fact, pointed out earlier, that the enemy threat as assessed by military intelligence staffs from the beginning always included a threat from the air by either shipborne or long-range shore-based aircraft.[83] This supposed enemy capability, although non-existent, was never seriously questioned. In

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[81]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 625, 14 December 1942.

[82]Ibid., 20 December 1942.

[83]One scenario envisioned a one-way Nazi bombing raid across the Atlantic in which the crews, having completed their mission, would ditch the aircraft and parachute into captivity as prisoners of war. Nicholson, More Newfoundlanders, pp. 536-537.

fact, AA defences were still being put in place even after the perceived threat had disappeared. This was partly due to the long lead time required to produce the ordnance. Once the decision had been taken to put the batteries in place that decision was never questioned. The military bureaucracy simply pressed on with their deployment.

In addition to fears of a bomber attack, as early as 1940, Nazi parachute operations in the Low Countries and Norway had given a certain credibility, at least in the minds of some senior officers, to the idea of a parachute raid on Gander. In fact, during his initial visit to Gander on 5 September 1940, Major-General Elkins, the GOCinC Atlantic Command, specifically warned against the seizure and destruction of the airport facility by airborne envelopment. This concern was reinforced in subsequent visits by senior airforce and army officers, especially Brigadier Earnshaw, who frequently travelled to Gander to inspect the defences. In his "appreciation of the situation" on the defence of the air base one of the attack scenarios envisioned was "a coordinated attack from the air with bombs followed by parachutists."[84] This perception was reinforced by the daring Nazi parachute assault on Greece and Crete in April and May 1941. Following

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[84]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 7 May 1941.

this operation there was a spate of mistaken paratroop sightings across the island.[85] On several occasions the AA batteries were placed on alert while the "stand-to" companies of the infantry spent long demanding hours searching for would-be invaders from the sky, only to return empty handed. Yet, as far - fetched as these reports were, each and every one had to be checked out for authenticity.

SAPPERS IN NEWFOUNDLAND

Every arm and service of W Force had its part to play during the long vigil in Newfoundland but special mention should be made of the work of the RCE. While the other branches of W Force carried out the necessary static role of garrison troops, the Sappers were actively employed in a myriad of tasks which took them all over the island and even to Labrador. Broadly speaking military and civil requirements in engineering services do not differ greatly. For this reason Canada was able to mobilize its civilian engineers and rapidly transform them into Sappers who applied to wartime requirements the same energy and initiative they employed in peacetime.

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[85]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 26 January 1942. On the night of 25 January 1942 there was a report of paratroopers landing on the outskirts of St. John's!

As we have seen already, sappers of the 2nd Fortress Company, RCE first arrived in Newfoundland in June 1940 to construct the battery position for the Newfoundland Militia's coast defence guns at Bell Island. Another detachment, also drawn from 2nd Fortress Company, was attached from the beginning to the infantry battalion stationed at Gander/Botwood to assist in the construction of field defences and plan and supervise the building of barracks before the onset of winter.[86] In St. John's during that autumn, the Engineers supervised the construction of the Lester's Field Barracks for the infantry battalion assigned to the ground defence of the capital and Shamrock Field Barracks to house the Newfoundland Militia.[87]

During the period 1940-1941 engineer responsibilities were divided among three separate units: W Force Engineers, No. 3 (Erection and Maintenance) Company and No. 6 Detachment RCE.[88] These units were responsible for a wide range of works and services in the St. John's, Gander and Botwood areas from field engineering tasks such as building of roads, bridges, beach defences, obstacles and demolitions to the erection of

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[86]Kerry, Engineers, p.66.

[87]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 878, October-November 1940.

[88]Ibid., 5 July 1945.

coast and AA positions and small arms ranges. As well, they were responsible for the supervision of large construction projects such as camps, ammunition and fuel depots, hospitals and hangars. Once these facilities were occupied, engineers took responsibility for the maintenance of their heating, lighting, water supply, sanitary and fire protection systems. Sappers also cleared large tracts of timberland and constructed new roads such as the one that linked Torbay Airfield with the capital.[89] The separate units often had overlapping responsibilities which resulted in conflicting demands. In May 1941 the Commander W Force complained to the Director of Engineer Services that because of increasing demands the engineer infrastructure in Newfoundland "was completely inadequate" and the "duties and works now exceed the capacity of both officers and other ranks."[90] The

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[89]Torbay Airfield, adjacent to St. John's, was built by Canada to provide an air base for the defended port of St. John's and for coverage of the Atlantic convoys. It was an excellent field with runways and hangars to accommodate the largest aircraft. The RCAF stationed fighter squadrons, long-range patrol squadrons and shorter-range striking forces there after it became operational at the end of 1941. The strategically located airfield proved to be an important asset in the battle of the Atlantic. It increased substantially the distance over which air cover could be provided to the shipping lanes and afforded an additional alternate landing field for Allied aircraft. The base also served as the eastern terminus for Trans Canada Airlines, making commercial air service to St. John's possible. (H.M.H. MacKinnon, "The RCAF in Newfoundland" in University of Toronto Quarterly [Vol 15, April 1946] pp. 213-221).

[90]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807, 12 May 1940.

situation throughout Canada was much the same. This prompted Ottawa to expand the establishment of fortress companies army wide. These expanded fortress companies were designated as operational troops and as such came under the direct command of the GOCinC. As well as the construction, operation and maintenance of engineer services generally within the fortress area, they were responsible for local field works.[91]

On 1 March 1942, 5th Fortress Company was authorized for active service in Newfoundland and distributed as follows: No. 1 Detachment and Headquarters Detachment plus a special Camouflage Section at St. John's; No. 2 Detachment Botwood; No. 3 Detachment Gander; and No. 4 Detachment Lewisporte plus a Detachment allocated to G Force at Goose Bay. Each detachment was allocated the necessary military tradesmen to carry out its assigned tasks. In addition to their construction engineering and maintenance roles all detachments had an operational role of denial of mobility to the enemy in case of a landing. The unit was commanded by Captain R.P. Nicholson until his posting overseas in July 1943 when he was replaced by Captain S.F. Willett.[92] Early in 1944 all fortress companies except the fortress company in Newfoundland were

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[91]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 878, 5 July 1945.

[92]Ibid.

disbanded to free personnel for overseas duty. 5th Fortress Company was redesignated No.16 Engineer Services and Works Company and with an expanded establishment continued to perform its numerous tasks under a new commanding officer, Major C.B. Bate.[93]

From its formation in March 1942 throughout 1943 the company's main task was construction. With the delivery of AA weapons in quantity in 1942, battery sites, requiring both pit installations and tower installations with ancillary buildings for ammunition storage and crew shelter, were fabricated. Gun positions were camouflaged by the gunners themselves under the supervision of engineers using materials drawn from engineer stores. At the same time battery positions for the newly arrived coast defence guns proceeded apace. Much of this construction was underground and included reinforced concrete emplacements, magazines, gun stores and crew shelters. Ancillary buildings in the battery area also had to be of sufficient thickness to give bomb-proof or splinter-proof protection. As well, the isolated situation of coast defence sites called for self-contained camps with reasonable amenities.[94] In addition to these defensive works other

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[93]Ibid.

[94]Kerry, Engineers, pp.522-525.

substantial projects undertaken by the sappers used directly employed civilians, large-scale contracts or a combination of these.[95] In all 600 permanent and 100 temporary buildings were erected.[96] At the height of the construction period in September 1942 more than 6,700 Newfoundlanders were employed on Canadian projects.[97] These construction projects gave a tremendous boost to Newfoundland's depressed economy since, in addition to jobs, many of the goods and services were purchased locally. In all Canada spent more than $65,000,000 (Table A):

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Malcolm MacLeod, Peace of the Continent, (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications Ltd., 1986) p.12.

TABLE A

Expenditures for construction and development of airfields and facilities in Newfoundland and Labrador to 31 March 1945

Botwood seaplane base and facilities	$2,808,145
Buchans aerodrome and facilities	1,046,733
Cape Bauld radio detachment	84,752
Donovans fuel depot	82,410
Gander aerodrome, seaplane base, and facilities	20,273,860
Gander radio detachment	8,095
Gander Lake-Lewisporte-Bishop's Falls Highway	1,423,200
Holyrood fuel depot	121,705
Lewisporte fuel depot	5,376
Port-aux-Basques radio detachment	66,192
St. John's Headquarters	1,831,156
St. Andrews radio range	200,389
Torbay aerodrome and facilities	11,709,431
Torbay-St. John's road	64,997
Refuelling bases	9,370
Brig Harbour radio detachment	16,239
Goose Airport and facilities	25,382,526
Sandgirt Lake radio weather station	44,107
Spotted Island radio detachment	12,518
Wilson radio range investigation	1,267
Total	$65,192,468

Source: MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, p.81.

By the end of 1942 W Force was nearing its peak strength. The most dramatic change was the enormous increase in the numbers of personnel and equipment for the artillery and engineers. The 103rd Coast Battery occupied three "forts" guarding the defended port of St. John's. The 106th Coast Battery manned two troop positions on the Bay of Exploits

guarding the sea approaches to Botwood, while further out the bay the 107th Coast Battery deployed its guns in defence of the important fuel depot and railhead at Lewisporte. Two AA regiments, the 25th in the St. John's/Torbay/Bell Island area and the 26th in the Gander/Botwood/Lewisporte area, deployed a total of eleven light and heavy batteries to defend the greatly expanded defence facilities at each of these locations. The magnitude of these defence expenditures in personnel and material indicated Canada's commitment to Newfoundland. It would seem that Canada had finally and irrecoverably recognized a special responsibility for its neighbour and fellow Commonwealth member.

CHAPTER IV

DEFENDING NEWFOUNDLAND

ALLIANCE AGREEMENTS AND DISAGREEMENTS

With the fall of Western Europe St. Pierre and Miquelon, the French colony just miles from Newfoundland and now under Vichy control, presented a ticklish problem for the Allies. At the same time the possibility that Britain might cave-in under increased Nazi pressure brought Canada and the United States inexorably together to counter what they now perceived could be a threat to both should Britain go down. In response the leaders of both countries agreed to the formation of a Permanent Joint Board on Defence to coordinate the defence activities of the two countries in the Western Hemisphere. Yet all was not smooth sailing. As the Canadian and United States military forces in Newfoundland expanded, the troublesome question of the command relationship between the two surfaced. The Americans favoured a unified command under their direction. The Chiefs of Staff Committee and the government were determined that any unified command must be vested in a Canadian officer. After the United States entered

the war in December 1941, what had been a simmering dispute boiled over. At the same time differing interpretations of the Visiting Forces Act strained relations with Newfoundland. The Canadian-Newfoundland dispute was quickly resolved. The Canadian-American problem, however, although addressed at the highest level, was never satisfactorily resolved. Until the end of the war, the military establishments of both countries remained independent, pledged solely to cooperation in the event of an emergency.

THE ST. PIERRE AND MIQUELON EPISODE

As we have already seen, the fall of France caused something approaching panic in Canada over its exposed eastern seaboard. While Newfoundland was the main concern, St. Pierre and Miquelon also became a worry. As a result Commander Roy of the RCN was sent to St. Pierre to survey and report on the situation in the French colony. Roy concluded that other than a German submarine exercising its rights under international law by using St. Pierre's port facilities, the territory would be of limited value to the enemy.[1] In a follow-up the RCN's Director of Plans Division concluded that he could see no reason for German occupation of the islands. He reasoned that

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[1]Anglin, St. Pierre, p. 131.

even if the enemy garrisoned the islands he could not long hold them without command of the sea. Further, if the enemy could seize control of the sea communications, "he would hardly waste his time on a couple of barren and uninviting islands when most of our (Canada's) coastline and that of Newfoundland would be his for the taking."[2]

It is obvious now that the French islands were, in fact, too small and their resources too limited to have been of any great use to the Axis, and their use as a springboard to attack either Newfoundland or Canadian territory was out of the question. In fact, Germany lacked the means to occupy St. Pierre and Miquelon with or without Vichy agreement.[3] A much more critical threat than German occupation of the islands was the likelihood that they would be used to provide vital information to the enemy.[4]

The foregoing notwithstanding, on 1 July 1940, Rear Admiral Nelles, Chief of the Naval Staff, recommended that Canada, possibly in concert with Newfoundland, take over the administration of St. Pierre and Miquelon for the duration of

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[2]Ibid., pp. 128-129.

[3]Ibid., p. 128.

[4]Ibid., p. 131.

the war. On 6 July 1940 a second military appreciation of the situation proposed by the Joint Planning Committee of the armed services estimated that the seizure of the islands would require elements of all three services; in fact, work had already begun, in secret, on a plan to seize the colony. Mackenzie King, however, opposed any drastic action. While publicly reaffirming his earlier pledge of 8 September 1939 to defend the colony, he opposed any overt action and for the time being King's views prevailed.[5]

The problem of St. Pierre and Miquelon arose again in the spring of 1941 as a result of two separate developments: the growing power of the collaborationist elements in Vichy France (the colony was under Vichy control) and the intensification of the Battle of the Atlantic (in February and March 1941 surface raiders sank twenty-one Allied ships within a few hundred miles of St. John's). Given the circumstances at the time, suspicions increased that St. Pierre and Miquelon were providing the Germans with vital information. That information could be passed by one of three means: the cable station, the fishing fleet, and the St. Pierre radio station. Of these, the powerful short wave radio station posed the

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[5]Ibid., p. 43.

greatest threat to Allied security.[6] By the autumn of 1941 the situation had worsened. In addition to the powerful surface raiders which marauded the North Atlantic that year, the stepped-up U-boat offensive now extended to Newfoundland coastal waters. As a result, the PJBD, prompted by its Canadian members, stated on 10 November that "the existence on the islands of an uncontrolled, high-powered wireless transmitting station contributed a potential danger to the interests of Canada and the United States."[7] There seems little reason to doubt that the radio station did aid the Axis but the precise extent of its aid is still a matter of dispute.[8]

It was the Free French, however, who ultimately settled the prickly problem of St. Pierre and Miquelon. Shortly after Pearl Harbor in December 1941, a Free French submarine accompanied by three corvettes under command of Admiral Muselier sailed out of Halifax harbour ostensibly to participate in manoeuvres. On the day before Christmas they arrived at St. Pierre and liberated the colony from Vichy

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[6]The radio station had been built in 1939 as part of a communications network to enable Air France to undertake trans-Atlantic flights. Its manager, Rene Delort, was fanatically pro-Vichy. (Anglin, St. Pierre, p. 132.)

[7]Anglin, St. Pierre, p. 132.

[8]Ibid., p. 133.

control.[9] Most Canadians, Newfoundlanders and even Americans and Britons responded with euphoria but the official reaction was very different.[10] Overnight the event took on a significance far outweighing its actual benefit since, by acting without prior consultation, the French had seriously irritated Allied national sensitivities. "The British were embarrassed, the Americans enraged and the Canadians distressed at the resulting unseemly display of Anglo-American disharmony."[11] The whole episode caused anger, scepticism and misunderstanding which plagued relations among the Allies for some time.[12] It was partly to forestall this kind of friction between allies that the Canadian and American governments the year before had entered into joint arrangement for the defence of North America.

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[9]Ibid., Introduction.

[10]Ibid., p. 99.

[11]Ibid.,

[12]The machinations and intrigues which led up to Admiral Muselier's action and the subsequent political ramifications and recriminations are beyond the scope of this paper and will not be dealt with. For an exhaustive interpretation see Douglas G. Anglin's The St. Pierre and Miquelon Affair of 1941 cited above.

THE OGDENSBURG AGREEMENT AND THE PERMANENT JOINT BOARD ON DEFENCE

On 14 June 1940, the day that Paris fell and Canada took the decision to send troops to Newfoundland, Prime Minister King met with J.P. Moffat, the American Minister to Canada. During the discussion King pointed out that since France was, for all intents and purposes, out of the war, an attack on the British Isles now seemed predictable. He went on to explain that if Great Britain should be in danger of imminent defeat, the British fleet would in all probability move to Canada and, in this event, Canada would require American assistance to cope with the emergency. He therefore recommended that joint staff talks between Canadian and American armed services officers concerning the defence of the Atlantic coast begin immediately.[13]

These joint staff discussions were duly approved. Accordingly, high-ranking officers from each country met in secret for the first time in Washington 11-12 July 1940. No commitments on either side were requested or given. Discussions focused primarily on the exchange of information

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[13]David Beatty, "The Canadian Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine and the Ogdensburg Agreement of 1940" in The Northern Mariner/Le Marin du Nord (Volume 1 No 1 January 1991) p. 10.

but also on Canadian requests for military equipment. On the whole the talks proved inconclusive and soon reached an impasse. This breakdown revealed not only that regular diplomatic and military channels were inadequate to handle defence matters but that no other structures existed between the two countries to deal with such questions.[14] At this juncture Prime Minister King suggested that the time had come when a personal meeting between the two heads of state might prove useful. Consequently on 16 August 1940 President Roosevelt telephoned the Prime Minister inviting him to meet the following day.[15]

The meeting took place in President Roosevelt's private railway car on a siding near the station of Ogdensburg, New York State just across the St. Lawrence River from the Canadian city of Cornwall. The seeds of this historic meeting, however, had been sown earlier. Two years before, President Roosevelt, accepting an honorary degree from Queen's University, had given this historic promise:

> Canada is part of the sisterhood of the British Empire. I give to you assurance that the people of

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[14]Ibid., p. 11.

[15]H.L. Keenleyside, "Canada-United States Permanent Joint Board on Defence 1940-1945" in International Journal, (Volume XVI No 1 Winter 1960-1961) p. 51.

> the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire.

And, in response to this assurance of aid, Prime Minister King had stated at Woodbridge on 20 August 1938:

> We too have our obligations as a good and friendly neighbour and one of them is to see that, at our own insistence, our Country is made as immune from attack or possible invasion as we can reasonably be expected to make it and that should the occasion ever arise enemy forces should not be able to pursue their way either by land, sea or air to the United States across Canadian territory.

Thus it would appear that when the two statesmen met at Ogdensburg they were already committed to the principle of joint defence of North America.[16]

Roosevelt opened the meeting by describing the "destroyers-for-bases" negotiations with Britain and proposed the establishment of a naval and air base along Canada's Atlantic seaboard or in the St. Lawrence area. King made it clear, however, that Canada did not wish to sell or lease sites but would willingly work out a plan whereby the United States could utilize Canadian facilities. The President then proposed the immediate creation of a Joint American/Canadian

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[16]Ibid., p. 52.

board consisting of representatives from each country, mainly from the armed services, whose purpose would be to consider, in the broad sense, the defence of the northern half of the Western Hemisphere. As far as Newfoundland was concerned, Roosevelt pointed out that, because of its unique political status, the United States would have to negotiate directly with the United Kingdom. King concurred but interposed that since Canada had already undertaken the defence of Newfoundland the British would, no doubt, want Canada to participate in the negotiations.[17] This meeting resulted in a press release on 18 August known as the "Ogdensburg Declaration." With it the two countries announced the creation of a Permanent Joint Board on Defence (PJBD) which would study mutual defence problems and submit recommendations to the two governments. This marked the beginning of a formal, on-going, high-level channel of communications between Canada and the United States to deal with common defence concerns.[18]

The Ogdensburg Agreement both furnished a solution to the urgent demands for co-operation in hemispheric defence, and although overlooked by some of its detractors at the time and

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[17]Beatty, "Canadian Corollary," p.13.

[18]A Brief History, pp. 1-5.

many others since, associated the United States as closely as possible with the belligerent Commonwealth.[19] Further it assured Canadians that the Americans would not stand idly by if Canada were attacked.[20] For Canada this was extremely important since by mid-August public opinion was thoroughly aroused over events in Europe (on 8 August the full force of the Luftwaffe had been directed against Great Britain) and had grown fearful for the security of North America itself. It is hardly surprising then that public response to the Ogdensburg Agreement was generally quite favourable. In Canada correspondents lauded King's "master-stroke" and praised this "tremendous event." Editorial comment in the national press was similar in tone.[21]

There was no delay in implementing the Ogdensburg Agreement. In fact, on the day following its announcement King proposed to Washington that the Board should hold its first meeting in Ottawa that week and give its immediate attention to Newfoundland and the East Coast and to the

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[19]J.L. Granatstein, "The Conservative Party and the Ogdensburg Agreement" in International Journal, (Volume XXII No 1 Winter 1966-1967) p. 74.

[20]Beatty, "Canadian Corollary," p. 15.

[21]Granatstein, "Conservative Party," p. 73.

accelerated procurement of armaments and ammunition.[22] Since German successes in Europe and the destruction of Great Britain's defences (which under the circumstances appeared imminent) would, given the perception at the time, expose North America to attack, it was inevitable that the attention of the Board should first be directed to the position of Newfoundland, the continent's most vulnerable part.[23]

Although not created expressly with Newfoundland in mind, the PJBD provided a forum wherein Newfoundland's defence could be discussed in a North American context. In fact, during its first year of existence, nearly one-half of the Board's recommendations dealt with Newfoundland, giving some idea of the importance attached to its defence.[24] At its first meeting on 26 August, Newfoundland therefore headed the list of issues to be discussed. In reviewing the situation in Newfoundland it became obvious that its defence required strengthening, and since Canada had already assumed the responsibility for the defence of the island, it was agreed that the existing Canadian garrison should be increased.[25]

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[22]Keenleyside, "Joint Board," pp. 52-53.

[23]Ibid., p. 56.

[24]MacKenzie, Atlantic Triangle, pp. 45-46.

[25]Ibid.

During the early years of its existence the Board usually met once a month. As the initial problems addressed by the Board were ironed out, meetings were required less frequently. Similarly the time spent in the meetings themselves reduced proportionally. It should be stressed that the Board had no executive power but was and remains today, a purely advisory agency. Yet, of the thirty-three recommendations submitted during the war years, none were scrapped outright. There were a few, however, on which no action was taken by one or both signatories. Surprisingly, differences of opinion rarely occurred along national lines but rather on service lines. Decisions were not arrived at by majority vote. Instead, issues were discussed until agreement was reached. This is not to say that every member agreed with every decision, only that no other solution would gain general acceptance.[26]

Perhaps it is worth noting here that the United States becoming a belligerent after Pearl Harbor had surprisingly little effect on the modus operandi of the PJBD. That the two countries would cooperate in defence if either were attacked from abroad was the essential reason for the bilateral agreement and this had been agreed to from the beginning. The Board's function was defensive in nature and in December 1941

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[26]Keenleyside, "Joint Board," pp. 54-56.

both countries were on the defence in North America against any foreign aggression. And so, Pearl Harbor made little difference to the military posture of either of the countries in Newfoundland.[27]

CANADIAN-AMERICAN COMMAND DEBATE

The problem of command in Newfoundland had its origins in the two defence plans prepared by the PJBD in the first two years of the war. The first plan, Joint Basic Defence Plan - 1940 or ABC-1, as it was known, was based on the assumption that Great Britain would fall and that Canada and the United States would be open to enemy attack. Completed in October 1940, it set out the obligations of Canada and the United States for the defence of the continent. Overall strategic direction was given to the United States. Unfortunately the question of organization and command was not addressed, an omission that would sour bilateral relations for some time after.

As we already have seen, at the first meeting of the PJBD in August it was decided that the Canadian garrison in Newfoundland needed strengthening. Canada would station an

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[27]Ibid., p. 65.

additional infantry battalion in St. John's immediately and provide necessary AA and coast artillery at selected locations as the troops and equipment became available. By December 1940 the Canadian army garrison in Newfoundland consisted of an infantry battalion, providing ground defence at Gander and Botwood, another battalion in St. John's to defend against enemy raiding parties, and a coast defence battery to secure the port of St. John's. Command was exercised by Brigadier P. Earnshaw from his Headquarters in St. John's. These troops were soon to be joined by a contingent of the United States Army which would act as the vanguard for American forces arriving in Newfoundland under the Leased Bases Agreement.

The mission of the two forces was complementary. Consequently, there was no serious conflict in the role allotted to the Canadian and United States forces assigned to Newfoundland. Had an enemy attack occurred the action by both sets of forces would have been substantially the same in aim and scope. In spite of a high level of cooperation between the commanders it was evident that some mechanism had to be created to co-ordinate any joint operations that might have to be undertaken. This need was recognized and would preoccupy the respective commanders in Newfoundland and high-level staffs for some time to come.

As the war progressed more favourably for a beleaguered Great Britain, Plan ABC-1 became outdated. The PJBD therefore began work on a new plan based on Great Britain's continued participation in the war. The second plan, Joint Basic Plan No. 2 - 1941, or ABC-22 as it was called, was substantially different in scope and intent from ABC-1 as it provided for action in the event of the United States becoming a belligerent. If the United States entered the war, the defence of North America would no longer be the prime consideration. The Canadian Chiefs of Staff Committee opposed giving the United States overall strategic direction since they believed that the American military equated strategic direction with tactical control. Because Canada considered Newfoundland to be within the orbit of its east coast defences, the Canadian government and the Chiefs of Staff could accept unity of command in Newfoundland only if overall military direction there was vested in Canadian officers. After much acrimony a compromise was finally reached whereby coordination of the military action of both countries was to be achieved by "mutual cooperation." A unified command could be established but only with the agreement of both signatories. Command in Newfoundland, for the time being at least, would become a separate responsibility with neither country having overall charge, a situation which would plague

local commanders in the years ahead.[28]

Meanwhile, in June 1941 the Canadians formed a joint Services Sub-Committee to encourage cooperation among the three Canadian services stationed in Newfoundland. It consisted of the head of each branch and reported to the Joint Services Committee, Atlantic Coast. Brigadier Earnshaw, as ranking officer, was appointed Commander of the Combined Canadian-Newfoundland Military Forces. At the same time, the question of a unified Canadian/American Command, which was never very far from the surface, again became an issue with the arrival of Major-General G.C. Brant, who replaced Colonel Welty as American Commander in the Autumn of 1941. In a letter to Brigadier Earnshaw on 12 November 1941 Brant wrote:

> Until arrangements can be made whereby unity of command can be established, I agree to the principle of cooperation as indicated in present plans. From past experience I am of the opinion, however, that cooperation which may work very well in peace is apt to break down under wartime conditions.[29]

When the United States became a belligerent after Pearl Harbor, Plan ABC-22 came into effect. In these new

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[28]David MacKenzie, "Aspects of the Command Problem in Newfoundland" in Newfoundland Quarterly (Volume LXXXIV No 3, Winter 1989). pp.25-31.

[29]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 12 November 1941.

circumstances American demands for unity of command became more insistent. For, although the Military Intelligence Division (G2) of the War Department's General Staff did not think the Nazis would invade the United States, they did think that they could "walk across to Canada on the causeway provided by Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland."[30] In these circumstances unity of command, at least in Brant's opinion, was a legitimate and essential wartime requirement and he was astonished by what he interpreted as Canadian indifference.

As the sense of urgency intensified in the days following Pearl Harbor Brant stepped up the pressure for unity of command. Earnshaw referred the problem to his GOCinC. On 12 December 1941 Major General Elkins replied:

> His (Brant's) contention [concerning ABC-22] is an obvious misreading which you should not repeat not allow unduly to perturb you ... delicate problem of divided or unified command devolves on PJBD or Chiefs of Staff and not on local commanders."[31]

Since the higher staffs could not agree on coordinating arrangements it remained for the local commanders in Newfoundland to work out local solutions to command problems.

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[30]Beatty, "Canadian Corollary," p. 10.

[31]Ibid., 12 December 1941.

On 23 December 1941 the three Canadian commanders and Major-General Brant joined to form a Local Joint Defence Committee to function under the chairmanship of its senior member. Initially the senior member was Brant. Canada, however, had already decided to replace Brigadier Earnshaw with a more senior officer who would outrank his American opposite number[32] and so it was at this point that the Minister of National Defence appointed Major-General L.F. Page as commander of the combined Canadian-Newfoundland Forces.[33] In making the announcement the Minister said that the Newfoundland command was raised to the rank of a Major-General in view of the increased importance attached to the island in the scheme of Empire Defence, and that Major-General Page's fine record in the last war and his efficient performance as the Commander Canadian Troops in Iceland "particularly well fit him for his appointment."[34] Page was only two days senior to Brant but this was enough to make him the senior officer in

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[32]To the US Consul General at St. John's it appeared that the move was part of Canadian policy to keep its political and military representative ahead of the Americans in rank. In support of this thesis he cited the earlier appointment of a Canadian High Commissioner to St. John's and the promotion of the naval commander to a rank senior to that of the US Naval station commander at Argentia. For an expansion of this theory see Dziuban, Military Relations, pp.116-126.

[33]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 807 26 December 1941. See also above p.100.

[34]Daily News, St. John's, 29 December 1941, p.3.

Newfoundland.[35] Nevertheless, difficulties persisted, not the least of which was the fact that local Canadian commanders could not act without consulting superiors who were located outside Newfoundland. This situation was exacerbated further by an inadequate communications system.

These problems notwithstanding, a spirit of cooperation quickly developed between the two commanders after Page invited Brant to visit W Force Headquarters on 5 January 1942 to discuss, in general terms, questions in connection with the local defence plan. A broad basis of agreement was reached by the two commanders on a number of major points. The current disposition of their respective forces in the St. John's area would stand: the United States Army was responsible for the east coast north of St. John's and the Canadian Army for St. John's, the coast to the south and the coast line of the east side of Conception Bay. They also agreed that, in the event of an attack on one or the other of the areas, the forces of the country not under direct attack would be made available to support and cooperate with the other.[36] Finally, for areas outside the St. John's region, definite zones of responsibility were advisable. The Canadian zones of

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[35]Stacey, Arms, p.363.

[36]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 6 January 1942.

responsibility would be Gander and Botwood, the American, Argentia. Both officers agreed to provide mutual support in the event of an attack developing in one of these zones.[37] The two commanders also discussed the question of the operational control of the Coast Defence artillery in the St. John's area.[38] Page explained the Canadian system for the command and control of fire to Brant and stressed that the fire of all available guns must of necessity be centrally directed. Brant conceded this point and agreed to place the fire of his batteries under Canadian command and control.[39]

These arrangements were made without participation by the other interested party - Newfoundland. The Newfoundlanders had detected some disharmony between the Canadians and Americans and feared that this could well jeopardize the effective defence of the island. To make matters worse the Newfoundlanders, who had no seat on the Local Joint Defence

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[37]Ibid.

[38]The United States eventually manned two Coast Defence batteries at St. John's - a battery of 155 mm mobile guns at Signal Hill and a battery of 8-inch railway guns on Barbette mountings at Red Cliff Head. For a fuller discussion of American artillery deployments in the St. John's area see James E. Candow, "The Tactical Role of American Armed Forces at Signal Hill Newfoundland During World War II" in Newfoundland Quarterly Vol LXXXVIII No.2, Summer/Fall, 1993) pp. 25-29.

[39]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 803, 6 January 1942.

Committee, felt isolated. The Commission of Government realized that under the circumstances, achieving unity of command was unlikely.[40] However, Commissioner for Justice and Defence Edward Emerson recommended the creation of a defence committee to include the Canadian/American service heads as well as the Commissioner for Defence. This committee, he hoped, would allow Newfoundland a greater voice in its own defence and provide a forum for the drafting of a joint defence plan.[41]

Emerson was eventually successful in drawing together the Canadian/American commanders at a meeting in St. John's on 24 January 1942 where he presented his plan for forming a "Local Combined Defence Committee."[42] There was little enthusiasm from the military men. But after some arm twisting by Emerson, they agreed that those present would comprise a committee to meet as required in order to coordinate existing military and civil defence plans.[43] In the interval Canada reorganized its own command structure and on 18 March 1942 Ottawa established a unified command for both the Atlantic and

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[40]MacKenzie, "Aspects," p.29.

[41]Ibid., pp. 29-30.

[42]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 808, 24 January 1942.

[43]Ibid.

Pacific coasts. Newfoundland became a sub-command of the East Coast under Major-General Page, now designated Commanding Newfoundland Defences, with strategic control over all three services.[44]

Page in the meantime had concentrated his efforts on improving his working relations with the Americans. By the summer of 1942 cooperation between the forces of the two countries in Newfoundland had improved considerably. Officers of the United States Newfoundland Base Command joined the new combined Canadian operations centre at St. John's and in August 1942 the military authorities of both countries agreed to develop a Canadian/United States Joint Defence Plan for the island. At the same time Major-General Brant proposed that joint military training commence. As a result, combined field exercises as well as Command Post and communications exercises for the staffs began the following month and were held at regular intervals in the ensuing years.[45]

The "unity of command" issue never completely disappeared, as evidenced by a disagreement which arose in the spring of 1943. At this time Major-General Brooks, who had

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[44]MacKenzie, "Aspects," pp. 28-29.

[45]Dziuban, Military Relations, pp. 116-126.

succeeded Brant as the United States Newfoundland Base Commander, convened a board of officers to investigate and report upon the possibility of unification of the AA defences in St. John's. They were joined in their deliberation by RCAF officers. In its report to Brooks the board recommended that the RCAF take over and man the American Intelligence Center and that a unified GOR, manned exclusively by Americans with Canadian interests represented by a liaison officer only, be established. In correspondence with the GOCinC, Major-General Page rejected the proposal out of hand. In his view Annex II to ABC-22 made "the defence of St. John's a Canadian responsibility and I cannot allow the AA defences of St. John's to be put under American control. In any case the GOR set up [which] they propose to use would be quite inadequate for our needs."[46] The GOCinC was in full agreement. He in turn discussed the proposal with the Air Officer Commanding Eastern Air Command and since they were of a like mind the proposal was rejected.[47]

By this point, in 1943 the war was turning in favour of the Allies and American efforts were increasingly focused on other theatres of war. At the same time, Canada proved

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[46]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 809, 26 April 1943.

[47]Ibid., 3 May 1943.

willing to assume more and more of the responsibility for the defence of Newfoundland. Relations between the local commanders continued to improve and there were no further serious difficulties between the two forces. Nevertheless until the end of the war, Canadian and United States military organizations in Newfoundland, although charged with parallel responsibilities, remained divided, and were dependent on cooperation solely in the event of an emergency.

CANADIAN-NEWFOUNDLAND COMMAND DEBATE

The "unity of command" issue between Canada and the United States was still unsettled when a similar problem surfaced involving the differing interpretations of the Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act, brought to a head when the Newfoundland Department of Justice and Defence questioned the GOC's authority to court martial a member of the Newfoundland Militia charged with a service offence. Page believed that a more serious issue was involved, namely his authority as Commander Canadian/Newfoundland Forces in Newfoundland and immediately sought clarification under the Act. The problem resulted from two different renderings of the Visiting Forces Act in the Newfoundland Gazette. The first, in December 1940, described the Newfoundland Militia as acting "in combination" with the Canadian Forces; three months

later, this was altered to "serving together."[48] The distinction was significant: "in combination" suggested that the two forces were under one command; "serving together," that they were under two separate commands. The issue was further complicated by questions of the respective jurisdictions of the Newfoundland Commissioner and the "appropriate Canadian Service Authority." Who had the authority to decide how and to what extent Canadian and Newfoundland forces would co-operate? Page thought it should be the "appropriate Canadian Service Authority" and persuaded Emerson to agree on the grounds that it would hasten that broader unity of command between American and Canadian forces in Newfoundland that the commissioner sought.[49] In due course Page was designated the "appropriate Canadian Service Authority" and with that move the Newfoundland Militia came under direct Canadian control.[50] In 1943 this authority was extended to include the military forces of any part of the British Commonwealth serving in Newfoundland.[51]

Once the Allies began to achieve greater success in the

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[48]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 812, 27 June 1942.

[49]Ibid., 24 July 1942.

[50]Ibid., 14 September 1942.

[51]Ibid., 29 April 1942.

European and Pacific Theatres American interests were directed elsewhere and with that shift the earlier acrimony over command relationships diminished accordingly. In these changed circumstances Canada was easily able to assert its role as the main player in the defence of the island. The irony was that Canada's concern in this process was to keep American influence in Newfoundland to an acceptable minimum. That Great Britain's "Oldest Colony" slipped irreversibly in this process into the Canadian military and strategic orbit was something that had been neither anticipated by Ottawa nor intended.

CHAPTER V

DEFENDING NEWFOUNDLAND

THE FINAL PHASE

As the course of the war turned in the Allies' favour an elemental change in Canadian involvement in the defence of Newfoundland occurred. During the "dangerous" period after the fall of Europe in 1940 the Canadian Army provided the best trained troops available in Canada for the Newfoundland garrison in order to forestall a possible large American defence undertaking on the island. After the successful Italian invasion and the build-up for a Normandy invasion began in earnest in 1943, however, it became clear that the island's defence was no longer as important an issue as it had been three years earlier. American hegemony in Newfoundland had been successfully averted and the island was securely fixed within the Canadian defence orbit. The army felt it could now safely replace the better trained, motivated and led volunteers of the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF) with draftees inducted under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) in order to free the volunteers for the more arduous overseas duty. The successful D-Day landings in June

1944 forced a complete reassessment of the army's defence task in Newfoundland and resulted in a phased reduction in the strength of W Force. Finally VE-Day in May 1945 marked the beginning of the wholesale pullout of Canadian troops from Newfoundland. This complete withdrawal confirmed that Canada's relationship with its Commonwealth neighbour was predicated more on wartime exigencies than on future considerations.

REINFORCEMENTS FOR OVERSEAS

Until 1943 the units of W Force were part of the Canadian Active Service Force and as such were liable for service outside the Western Hemisphere. The majority ended up in the European Theatre (the one notable exception being the Royal Rifles of Canada who were sent to Hong Kong) or were used as reinforcement units. Occasionally drafts from these units were sent overseas. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, for example, arrived in Newfoundland in September 1941 with a complement of 850 all ranks. By April 1943 the number had shrunk to 600.[1] The PEIH found themselves in the same predicament. As a result two companies of the Dufferin and

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[1]Geoffrey Hayes, The Lincs: A History of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at war, (Alma, Ontario: Maple Leaf Route, 1986) pp. 11-12.

Haldimand Regiment had to be brought to Newfoundland, one for attachment to each unit. Units so affected found the practice of supplying overseas drafts disconcerting. Many saw the drafts as an indication that the regiment's strength might be so depleted that it would lose its place in the order of battle. And so, when a unit was required to furnish a draft for overseas, most in the unit volunteered, not because of dissatisfaction with the unit but because perhaps it was better to leave the unit before it was broken up. As unit personnel numbers dwindled the increased demand on those remaining also resulted in a corresponding drop in morale.

Circumstances changed in 1943. To understand why it is necessary to explain how the Canadian Army was then organized. The Canadian Army consisted of three more or less separate components. On the outbreak of war a large number of units of the Non-Permanent Active Militia (NPAM) were mobilized. These units, together with those of the Permanent Force (PF) augmented by volunteers direct from civilian life, constituted the Canadian Active Service Force (CASF), whose members were liable for service anywhere. The Reserve Army, made up for the most part of men who for various reasons such as age or medical reasons were unfit for overseas duty, acted as a home defence force. With the fall of Western Europe it became obvious that greater numbers were required and so the

government authorized compulsory military service under the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA), passed by Parliament on 21 June 1940. For political reasons the act did not extend to obligatory service outside Canada. Personnel thus conscripted were limited to home defence duties. After Japan entered the war there was considerable popular demand for general conscription.[2] In April 1942, after a decisive "Yes" vote in a national plebiscite on the issue, the prohibition on sending persons called up under the NRMA out of the country was removed. In September of the same year Newfoundland was authorized as a place of duty for NRMA personnel and NRMA soldiers were posted to specific units in Newfoundland to free CASF soldiers up for service overseas. Beginning in 1943 no more CASF infantry units were posted to Newfoundland and the CASF personnel of the existing artillery and other units in Newfoundland were systematically replaced by NRMA soldiers. The first NRMA infantry battalion posted to Newfoundland, the Régiment de Joliette, arrived in January

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[2]The question of conscription was a highly contentious and emotionally charged issue in Canada. It has been dealt with at length in many Canadian histories of the period. See for instance Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, Chapter 5, "Towards the Plebiscite and Bill 80" pp. 133-184, W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1977) Chapter 11 "The Home Front," pp. 235-268, Desmond Morton, Canada and War: A Military and Political History (Toronto: Butterworths, 1981) Chapter 5, "Total War at Home" pp. 104-125.

1943 to relieve the Algonquin Regiment in Botwood.[3] Next came the Régiment de Ste Hyancinthe which replaced the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in St. John's in April 1943.[4] These units were in turn relieved by the Régiment de Montmagny in February 1944[5] and the Régiment de Québec in September 1944.[6]

In the summer of 1943 a change also occurred in the Command of W Force. Major-General Elkins, who had been GOCinC Atlantic Command since its inception, retired from the Canadian Army. Major-General Page, with his extensive experience in Eastern Canada and as GOC Newfoundland, was selected as his replacement.[7] Page, who had been awarded the Companion of the Order of the Bath (CB) in the sovereign's birthday list for 1943, took up his new duties in Halifax in July.[8] His relief in St. John's was the former distinguished Montreal businessman and long-time citizen-soldier Major-

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[3]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 184, January 1943.

[4]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 191, April 1943.

[5]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 189, February 1944.

[6]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 190, September 1944.

[7]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 809, 9 June 1943.

[8]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 812, 2 June 1943.

General F.R. Phelan.[9] Arriving in Newfoundland in late June, Phelan took command on 6 July 1943.[10] Just three months later, NDHQ announced that Phelan was to take up a new appointment as Director General Reserve Army in Ottawa[11] and named as his successor self-made millionaire and long-serving militia officer Major-General P.E. Leclerc.[12] Leclerc arrived in St.

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[9]In 1915 Major-General Phelan went overseas as a Lieutenant in the 60th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force and continued to serve with the battalion until hostilities ceased, having attained the rank of Major and been awarded the DSO and MC. Between the wars he served in the Canadian Grenadier Guards, a Montreal-based militia unit, which he commanded during the 1930s. In 1937 he was promoted to Colonel and given command of the Brigade of Canadian Guards. At the outbreak of hostilities he was called up in a staff appointment and July 1940 he was appointed Deputy Adjutant-General at National Defence Headquarters in the rank of Brigadier. Shortly after this he was posted to Canadian Military Headquarters, London, England in the same appointment. In July 1941 he took command of the Canadian Reinforcement Units Overseas, the post he held prior to receiving his promotion to Major-General and appointment as General Officer Commanding W Force. Evening Telegram, St. John's, 5 July 1943, p.4.

[10]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 810, 6 July 1943.

[11]Ibid., 1 October 1943.

[12]In World War I Major-General Leclerc enlisted as a Sapper and later transferred to the Royal 22nd Regiment. He won the Military Medal (MM) during that conflict. Between the wars he served in the Régiment de Joliette, a Quebec-based militia unit. After commanding the regiment he was promoted to Colonel and given command of the 11th Reserve Infantry Brigade. At the outbreak of World War II he took command of the Infantry Training Centre at the Citadel, Quebec City. In August 1940 he was promoted to Brigadier and proceeded overseas in command of 5 Brigade in 2 Infantry Division. He was promoted to Major-General in May 1942 and returned to Canada to take command of 7 Division, which appointment he held until his posting to Newfoundland as General Officer

John's on 10 October and took command six days later.[13]

As the demands for overseas drafts increased in 1943 Atlantic Command decided to replace those infantry units employed as ground defence at selected east coast airfields with specially organized and equipped artillery units designated Aerodrome Defence Companies (AD Company). Because of Gander's size and isolated location the RCAF wanted to maintain the infantry battalion. W Force Headquarters voiced similar concerns but to no avail. Atlantic Command ordered that the infantry units were to be withdrawn. In August the Pictou Highlanders, who had relieved the Prince Edward Island Highlanders in February, returned to Canada and were replaced by 1 AD Company augmented by a rifle company from the Botwood defence battalion. In St. John's 2 AD Company took up its duties at Torbay, augmented by a rifle company of the St. John's defence battalion. This arrangement was of short duration, however, for in October elements of Régiment de Chateaugay, recently designated Air Defence Battalion (East Coast) and specially trained and equipped for this duty, arrived in Newfoundland. 6 Company took responsibility for ground defence at Gander and 5 Company at Torbay. The AD

Commanding W Force. St. John's Daily News, 7 October 1943. p.3.

[13]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 810, 10 October 1943.

Companies were returned to Canada and disbanded.

When the successful landings in Normandy were made public in June 1944, most Canadian personnel greeted the news with enthusiasm. At least the end of the war appeared to be in sight. But there was also a drawback to the good news. Casualty rates in the Italian Theatre had been higher than expected and now with the opening of the North West Europe Theatre the requirements for reinforcements multiplied.[14] NRMA soldiers, who by now comprised almost the entire strength of W Force, were pressed to volunteer for overseas service. The gravity of the situation was underlined by the fact that the GOC, Major-General Leclerc, was directed by NDHQ to oversee the recruiting drive personally.[15] Leclerc had been briefed on this possibility in April when he had travelled to Ottawa

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[14]Much recent research indicates that the reinforcement problem was an artificial one driven not so much by a shortage of personnel but rather by their misemployment. Infantry casualty rates were higher than expected while the other arms and services had more men than required. There were more than sufficient personnel in the reinforcement pool but the majority had been trained for almost every specialty except infantry. See for instance Granatstein and Hitsman, Broken Promises, Chapter 6 "The Crisis of 1944" pp. 185-244, Douglas and Greenhous, Shadows, Chapter 11, "The Home Front," pp. 235-268, Morton, Canada and War, Chapter 6, "Limited War Overseas" pp. 126-149.

[15]No accurate figures could be found by the author to ascertain the overall success - or failure - of this recruiting campaign. However, a War Diary entry for 25th AA Regiment in January 1945 noted that nine officers of that unit had voluntarily transferred to the infantry for overseas duty.

to receive the Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) from the Governor General.[16]

In December 1944 Major-General Leclerc retired. His replacement was the scion of the New Brunswick chocolate empire and veteran militia officer, Major-General H.N. Ganong.[17] Ganong arrived in St. John's during the first week of December and took command on the 16th.[18]

DEMOBILIZATION AND REPATRIATION

In late winter and spring the descent of Arctic pack ice choked the northeast coast of the island, effectively eliminating the threat from enemy shipping. During this

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[16]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 810, 12 April 1944.

[17]In 1915 Major-General Ganong went overseas as a Lieutenant in the 5th Canadian Expeditionary Force. After World War I he returned to his home in New Brunswick where he served in the York Regiment of Militia and after amalgamation, with the Carleton and York Regiment. He was commanding his regiment when it was activated and took it overseas as part of 1 Division in 1939. In March 1941 he was promoted to Brigadier and commanded a brigade in 1 Division until July 1942 at which time he was promoted to Major-General. He returned to Canada to take command of 8 Division of Pacific Command and when that division was disbanded he took command of 6 Division of the same Command. He held that appointment until his posting to Newfoundland as General Officer Commanding W Force. (St. John's Evening Telegram 16 Dec 1944, p.2.)

[18]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 811, 16 December 1944.

period, the personnel of the coast batteries were normally safely withdrawn from Botwood and Lewisporte during which time the men could undergo other training.[19] As well, by the autumn of 1944, the success of the D Day invasion allowed NDHQ to reassess the coast artillery requirements in Newfoundland and in October 1944 it was decided to withdraw the coastal artillery from the north east coast as soon as the winter freeze began. As the ice began to form in Botwood harbour in late November, Lieutenant-Colonel J.J. MacKenzie, Commander Defended Port Botwood, began dismantling his searchlights and their engines.[20] On 24 January 1945 the order came to dismantle the guns and ancillary equipment, a process which began immediately.[21] By the first week in February all coast artillery personnel had entrained for St. John's en route to Canada. Meanwhile in Lewisporte on 8 February the 107th Battery War Diary recorded that "as of 1400 hrs 107th declared officially out of action...work begun on preparations to turn in guns, lights, engines and ammunition. Small arms ammunition withdrawn from troops."[22] Action to close the battery down proceeded apace and on 13 February along with

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[19]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 372, 5 April 1943.

[20]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 374, 27 November 1945.

[21]Ibid., 24 January 1945.

[22]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 377, 13 February 1945.

their supporting infantry troops the 107th were en route to St. John's, leaving behind only two sappers from 16 Engineer Services and Works Company as caretakers.[23]

Thus as early as the autumn of 1944, as the threat to the Atlantic coast, including Newfoundland, diminished, Canada began to reduce its eastern defences accordingly. This partial withdrawal of army troops from the island at the earliest opportunity confirmed that as the danger of military action by the Axis in the Western Hemisphere faded Canada's commitment to Newfoundland would similarly be reduced. Maintaining troops in Newfoundland once the war had ended was obviously something Canada had never seriously considered.

While the gunners of the 106th and 107th Batteries were being repatriated the last unit to be posted to Newfoundland was preparing for its move. The Edmonton Fusiliers, then stationed at Camp Niagara, departed by rail for Quebec City where it boarded the SS Lady Rodney for St. John's to relieve the Régiment de Québec. Arriving in St. John's in early March 1945, the battalion moved into the Lester's Field Barracks.[24]

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[23]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 878, 14 February 1945.

[24]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 058, 7 March 1945.

On 8 May 1945 St. John's received news that the Allies had won a complete victory in Europe with the unconditional surrender of Germany. Civilian workers were given the day off and all army units observed "Sunday Routine." However at W Force Headquarters, "normal routine was maintained."[25] Festivities to mark the occasion were remarkably restrained, so much so, that the Headquarters diarist recorded that "VE-Day celebrations by W Force passed off in a quiet and orderly fashion. The conduct of the troops brought credit to the Canadian Army."[26] The war diary of 16 Engineer Works and Services Company had a similar entry: "there was not much excitement on the army side of the track for it being VE-Day but the airforce boys are sure going to town!"[27]

On 9 May the Edmonton Fusiliers reverted from operational to training status and were ordered to turn in all heavy weapons, ammunition, engineer stores and emergency rations.[28] The following day, the artillery units, except for those employed in anti-submarine duties, received the same order with the addendum "only the requirements of routine duty will

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[25]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 811, 8 May 1945.

[26]Ibid.

[27]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 878, 8 May 1945.

[28]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 15, 058, 9 May 1945.

govern Commanding Officers in granting leave or furlough."[29] In the weeks that followed CO's were generous in the granting of leave and for those soldiers remaining on duty, fatigues, maintenance and sports became their main activities. The officers, meanwhile, were kept busy with all the necessary administrative procedures required to prepare the personnel and material of W Force for return to Canada. At the same time NDHQ decided that in view of the existing circumstances the command of W Force should be reduced to a Brigadier's position. Brigadier L.C. Goodeve, who as Chief of Staff Atlantic Command was no stranger to Newfoundland, was given the job of overseeing the withdrawal of the Canadian army from Newfoundland.[30] Arriving via Argentia at the end of May he relieved Major-General Ganong on 1 June 1945.[31]

Since only in exceptional circumstances would soldiers be discharged outside Canada, a priority basis for the booking of homeward bound transport was allocated. Personnel in

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[29]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 493, 10 May 1945.

[30]Brigadier Goodeve was a Permanent Force Artillery Officer of extensive experience in both regimental and staff appointments. After World War I he served administrative appointments in Victoria, at the War Office in London, in Toronto and in Ottawa. He was Director of Organization at NDHQ early in the war and in 1940 was transferred to Halifax as Colonel of the General Staff at Atlantic Command Headquarters. (St. John's Evening Telegram, 2 June 1945, p.7.)

[31]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 811, 1 June 1945.

Newfoundland who volunteered for service in the Pacific Theatre or for the occupation forces in Germany were given first priority and awarded an immediate thirty days leave upon arrival in Canada. Personnel with 150 or more points were granted second priority.[32] Upon arrival in Canada they were awarded thirty days leave after which their discharge documentation and medical would begin. Normal release proceedings were expedited only for compassionate reasons or at the request of the Department of Labour who needed service personnel with special qualifications, for industry. Only in exceptional circumstances would the personnel of W Force be repatriated other than by units.

On 25 May NDHQ ordered all AA personnel to return to Canada by the most expeditious means.[33] Within a week all guns and ancillary equipment had been returned to the ordnance

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[32]The demobilization of personnel was governed by a point system. Three points were awarded for each month or part thereof spend overseas (ie; outside the Western Hemisphere) and two points for each month or part thereof spend in Canada (including Newfoundland). Married men, widowers or divorcees with dependant children were awarded a bonus of twenty percent. One point per month or part thereof was deducted for periods of "non-performance of military duty" which included being in detention or custody under sentence, in custody awaiting trial, absent without leave or leave without pay. All demobilization regulations applied equally to men and women except that married women whose husbands were being demobilized would have priority over all others. (WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 878, 18 May 1945)

[33]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 811, 25 May 1945.

depot and at the same time units began "the stripping of files, returning classified material to Headquarters and burning of obsolete material."[34] On 10 June all personnel of 25th AA Regiment moved to the Transit Camp. Three days later they boarded the Lady Rodney for Bedford, Nova Scotia.[35] On 27 May W Force Headquarters had recommended to NDHQ the abandonment of all coast defence battery positions.[36] But it took a month before sufficient transportation was available to repatriate 103rd Coast Battery. Finally on 29 June the unit diarist recorded "all bedding turned in and battery proceeding to Transit Camp leaving Fort Cape Spear, Fort Amherst and Fort Chain Rock as it remembers it [sic] cold clammy, foggy and miserable."[37] The unit embarked on the Lady Rodney for Canada on 2 July.[38]

For the Engineers, because of the nature of their job, the termination of hostilities meant that their workload increased rather than decreased. As the operational units departed for Canada and demobilization the RCE continued the

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[34]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 493, 5 June 1945.

[35]Ibid., 13 June 1945.

[36]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 811, 27 May 1945.

[37]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 372, 29 June 1945.

[38]Ibid., 2 July 1942.

demanding task of dismantling the large number of now surplus facilities. To expedite this task No. 16 Engineer Services and Works Company was designated custodian for all army assets, less ordnance, until disposal by the War Assets Corporation.[39]

As personnel began to depart in large numbers, Canada offered surplus accommodation to the Commission of Government for Newfoundland servicemen returning from overseas duty with the British forces in order to expedite their release procedures. Newfoundland authorities, however, refused the offer, requesting instead office space.[40] The empty barracks were therefore used for a short time as a transit camp for a small number of repatriated Canadian prisoners-of-war who had been returned aboard RCN vessels.[41]The Commission also inquired of W Force Headquarters if it would be willing to repurchase the military equipment sold to Newfoundland during the hostilities. In reply the Commission of Government was told such matters should now be dealt with by the Newfoundland and Canadian governments through the Department of External

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[39]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 14, 878, 3 July 1945 .

[40]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 813, 2 June 1945.

[41]Ibid., 7 June 1945.

Affairs.[42] Just over a month later W Force recommended to NDHQ that the Bell Island coast artillery position be stripped of all usable stores and equipment less guns (but with their breech blocks removed) and abandoned since the Newfoundland Government had declined to maintain the position.[43]

The announcement of VJ-Day was somewhat of an anticlimax for W Force since so few Canadian army personnel had been engaged in the Pacific Theatre. To mark the occasion, however, a parade and service of thanksgiving was held.[44] Finally, at the end of September, direction was received from NDHQ for the withdrawal of the remainder of the Canadian Army Garrison with the exception of administrative and maintenance personnel and those supporting the remaining RCAF detachment.[45] The last elements of the last operational unit, the Edmonton Fusiliers left Newfoundland 31 October 1945 and with this departure the Canadian Army presence in Newfoundland came to an end.

Thus we can see that the end of the war signaled Canada's

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[42]Ibid., 29 June 1945.

[43]Ibid., 1 August 1945.

[44]Ibid., 15 August 1945.

[45]Ibid., 29 September 1945.

intentions concerning its military role in peacetime Newfoundland. Simply put there would be none. As long as danger threatened Canada was determined to play the role of chief protector for its eastern neighbour. Even the arrival on the scene of its powerful southern neighbour did not deter Canada from its resolve to be the principal player in Newfoundland's defence. Once peace was achieved, however, Canada saw no role in Newfoundland. Ottawa, therefore, directed that the troops and their military equipment be repatriated as quickly as possible and that the infrastructure, so costly to build, be disposed of (at a fraction of the original cost). This was hardly an indication of ulterior designs. Rather it was an indication that having "done the right thing" Canada was willing to retire and let history take its course.

CONCLUSION

The importance of Newfoundland in any plan for the defence of Canada should have been more generally recognized than it had been by Canada's political leaders during the turbulent 1930s. It took events in Europe, however, to arouse the politicians to acknowledge what their military advisors had been telling them for years, namely, that Canada's east coast defence was inextricably tied to the defence of the island. Newfoundland was a North American problem for although it heretofore had been dependent on Great Britain for its defence, in the radically changed strategic situation of 1940, it was beyond the capacity of Great Britain to discharge that responsibility. Once its importance to the Atlantic coast's defence was fully recognized, Newfoundland became a key element in Canadian defence. For that reason, the Canadian cabinet was determined that Canada would supplant Great Britain in the defence of the island. This was initially reflected in the timely dispatch of military and airforce units in the summer of 1940 to secure Newfoundland's vital airfields following which Canada expanded its control of Newfoundland's defences with the establishment of W Force in the autumn of the same year.

At the same time, however, the United States also recognized the importance of Newfoundland to North American defence. Although the American republic was not yet officially a belligerent - not before Pearl Harbor in December 1941 - they were very concerned by the distinct possibility of a British collapse immediately following the defeat of France in 1940. Given the doubtful strategic situation in the months that followed, the Americans proposed and the Canadians agreed to the formation of a Permanent Joint Board on Defence to coordinate the defence efforts of both countries with respect to North America. Although not created expressly with Newfoundland in mind, in its first year of existence nearly one-half of the board's recommendations dealt with the island colony.

Increasing United States involvement in the North Atlantic brought American troops to Newfoundland for the first time in January 1941. By then, however, Canada fully realized that the defence of its Maritime provinces depended in great part on a secure Newfoundland firmly within the Canadian defence orbit. For this reason, Canada decided that it could not allow any other party to have control of the defence of such an important component in its own defence scheme. Even after the United States became a belligerent in December 1941, and PJBD agreements notwithstanding, Canada determined that it

would be the pre-eminent partner in the defence of Newfoundland. To forestall American dominance, Canada rejected American overtures for "unified command" in Newfoundland unless command was vested in Canadian officers - a condition to which the Americans would not agree. Canada opted instead for "mutual cooperation" and to shore up its position, appointed service officers senior to their American opposite numbers. Thus, it became obvious that after the initial "dangerous" period following the fall of Europe and the establishment of the PJBD, Canadian defence policy in Newfoundland was driven more by concerns about the United States involvement in Newfoundland than an Axis threat. Through joint planning, combined exercises and close cooperation between local commanders, success was achieved in coordinating the military actions of the two countries in Newfoundland. Nevertheless, until the end of the war, the Canadian and American army organizations remained independent, pledged solely to cooperation in the event of an emergency.

Canada had had no clear idea of what a commitment to Newfoundland might involve when it first sent military personnel to the island in 1940. As the war progressed and Canada asserted itself as Newfoundland's principal defender, increasing numbers of Canadian troops were stationed on Newfoundland soil. The Newfoundland undertaking was a new and

challenging experience for the Canadian Army, given that from the outset it was operating independent of any higher allied authority. This meant that it had to establish its own modus operandi. Newfoundland troops came under Canadian command and Newfoundland became, in effect, a sub-command of the east coast of Canada. The Senior Canadian Army Officer functioned as the Commander Newfoundland Defences and exercised strategic direction over all three services. W Force took responsibility for internal security, manned fixed defences and provided mobile reserves for counter-attack against an enemy lodgement. Its role was crucial, especially in its artillery contribution, manning both AA and coast defence guns guarding the major ports and airfields. This was no small undertaking, for it involved thousands of troops, large amounts of materiel and the construction of numerous facilities.

Thus the war had brought Canada and Newfoundland together strategically and militarily, thereby adding to the already well-established social, cultural and commercial ties. It must be emphasized that this new strategic and military connection did not make Confederation inevitable. Indeed, Canada's military withdrawal from Newfoundland was virtually complete before the end of 1945. It may be, however, that it made Confederation more possible since Canada now had a much stronger appreciation of just how important Newfoundland was

to its own security.

APPENDIX A

COMMANDERS, COMMANDING OFFICERS AND OFFICERS COMMANDING

W FORCE

Brigadier P. Earnshaw, DSO, MC	16 October 1940 - 24 December 1941
Major-General L.F. Page, CB, DSO	25 December 1941- 5 July 1943
Major-General F.R. Phelan, DSO, MC, VD	6 July 1943 - 15 October 1943
Major-General P.E. Leclerc, CBE, MM, ED	16 October 1943 - 15 December 1944
Major-General H.N. Ganong, CBE, VD	16 December 1944- 31 May 1945
Brigadier L.E. Goodeve, DSO	1 June 1945 -

ARTILLERY

COAST ARTILLERY

"Q" Battery RCA	Captain R.R. Ward
103 Coast Battery RCA	Major D.V. Rainnie Major R.P. Hoar
106 Coast Battery RCA	Major C.J. MacDonald
107 Coast Battery RCA	Major R. Sinclair

ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY

25 AA Regiment	Lieutenant-Colonel C.V. Harris Lieutenant-Colonel R.F. Capel

26 AA Regiment (E)	Lieutenant-Colonel I.B. MacCullum
26 AA Regiment (F)	Lieutenant-Colonel J.E. Plamondon

ENGINEERS

5TH Fortress Company RCE	Captain R.P. Nicholson Captain S.F. Willett
16 Engineer Services and Works Company	Major C.B. Bate

INFANTRY

Black Watch Royal Highlanders of Canada	Lieutenant-Colonel K.G. Blackader, MC, ED
Queen's Own Rifles of Canada	Lieutenant-Colonel H.C. MacKendrick, ED
Royal Rifles of Canada	Lieutenant-Colonel W.J. Home, MC
Victoria Rifles of Canada	Lieutenant-Colonel I.H. Eakin
Sherbrooke Fusiliers	Lieutenant-Colonel McA'Nulty
Lincoln and Welland Regiment	Lieutenant-Colonel C.A. Muir

Prince Edward Island Highlanders	Lieutenant-Colonel C.C.Thompson, MC, VD
Algonquin Regiment	Lieutenant-Colonel J.B.Stewart, E.D.
Pictou Highlanders	Lieutenant-Colonel J.A. Adamson, MC, ED
Régiment de Joliette	Lieutenant-Colonel G.V. deBellefeville, E.D.
Régiment de Ste Hyancenthe	Lieutenant-Colonel R. Hamel
Régiment de Montmagny	Lieutenant-Colonel J.N.E. Grenier, E.D.
Régiment de Québec	Lieutenant-Colonel L.P. Lebel, E.D.
Régiment de Chateauguay	Lieutenant-Colonel J.P. Croteau
Edmonton Fusiliers	Lieutenant-Colonel T.G. Brown, E.D.

APPENDIX B

GOOSE BAY DEFENDED AREA

Canadian soldiers were also stationed on Newfoundland territory in Labrador. The uncertain weather conditions at Gander had long been a matter of concern and as well by 1941 it was obvious that the capacity of the airfield there was being taxed to the limit. The day-to-day operations and the increasing numbers of ferried aircraft made it clear that an additional air facility was required on the east coast. Labrador, it was decided, offered the best possibility since it would open a new ferry route via Greenland and Iceland and extend the reach over the North Atlantic for land-based aircraft employed in the anti-U-boat role. In early August 1941, therefore, the Canadian Government requested Newfoundland's permission to conduct a survey for a suitable location. By the end of August a site on a remarkable sand plateau at Goose Bay forty miles from the coast but with access to the ocean through Hamilton Inlet was selected. Construction began immediately and in one of Canada's most phenomenal wartime engineering feats all records for speed and ingenuity were broken. By December, although the runways were not yet paved, the airfield was in use and within a year it

was fully operational.[1]

The Goose Bay Defended Area became an army responsibility and to meet this task a new formation, G Force, was established. It came under the operational control of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Atlantic Command and was supported administratively by the Military District No. 6. In June 1942 G Force commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J.N. Medhurst, and consisting of the New Brunswick Rangers infantry battalion, 108th Coast Defence Battery, 15th HAA Battery, 30th LAA Battery with supporting and ancillary troops sailed from Halifax aboard the SS Lady Rodney for Labrador.[2]

The New Brunswick Rangers provided security and local defence. To provide protection against air attack the 15th HAA Battery, equipped with 3.7- in guns, guarded the outer perimeter while the 40mm Bofors guns of the 30th LAA Battery were grouped around the hangars and runways to provide close-in protection. The 108th Coast Battery was given the task of guarding the sea approaches by denying the passage of the narrows between Hamilton Inlet and Lake Melville to enemy

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[1]Although navigation by sea to Goose Bay is open for only three months, during that time a year's supply of staple foods, fuel and other heavy goods were taken in by ship. Air freight supplied fresh foods and routine needs throughout the rest of the year.

[2]WD, NAC, Volume 13, 858, June-July 1942.

submarines and light surface craft. The well camouflaged surprise battery manned two 75mm guns supported by two 60-inch searchlights.[3] Like the 106th and 107th C.D. Batteries on the northeast coast of the island of Newfoundland the 108th withdrew from its battery position during the freeze-up and spent the winter in the relative comfort of the air base.

Because of the isolation and the rigorous living conditions it was decided to rotate all the personnel of G Force out of the Goose Bay Defended area after one year. Consequently the following summer the New Brunswick Rangers were replaced by an Airfield Defence Company of the Régiment de Chateauguay while the 15th HAA and 30th LAA Batteries were replaced by the 1st and 6th HAA and 25th LAA Batteries. The 108th CD Battery remained in place but all unit personnel were replaced. One unit was added, No. 10. GOR was established to control the fire of the AA batteries. Lieutenant-Colonel Medhurst was replaced in command by Lieutenant-Colonel G.T. Roach.[4]

After the allied invasion of Europe in the summer of 1944 the enemy threat was assessed as minimal and a decision was

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[3]Nicholson, Gunners, pp. 467 and 489.

[4]WD, NAC, RG24, Volume 13, 858, July 1943.

taken to withdraw all army operational units before winter freeze-up.

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