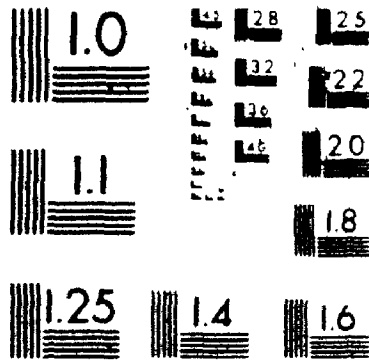


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Canada

In Defence of Unity:
Canada's Military Policies, 1935 - 1944.

by

© Martha Ann Hooker, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of History

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

September, 1985

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rationales for military contributions to imperial wars. (1) Those Canadians had been antagonized in 1914 when Britain's declaration of war on Germany had automatically committed Canada to war. The limits of their patience were reached in 1917, when the government conscripted Canadians for overseas service in 'Britain's war'. Since the Statute of Westminster (1931) Canada had had the legislative autonomy from Britain to make an independent decision for war - the supreme act of a nation. This autonomy gave additional emphasis to arguments against participation in a major war in which Britain was involved simply because some believed that Canada should act upon her right to remain detached from Europe's problems. The King government in the 1930s would incur the risk of seriously dividing the country if it made a commitment to participation before war erupted. Defence policy was an explosive political issue and the Prime Minister's first concern was to avoid divisiveness.

When Canada went to war in 1939, there was substantial domestic pressure to support Great Britain. Canada sent an

(1) See H.B. Neatby, Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973) pp. 100-121. According to Neatby, this question was first considered seriously with the Boer War, at which time it became quite clear to the politicians that the Imperial connection evoked such different emotional responses among French and English Canadians (as well as different views over the best means of national development) that it was recognized as a serious challenge to Canadian unity. French Canadians, "with their desire for survival as a racial group could not but be aware that any form of Imperial unity would so reduce their influence as to endanger this survival." English Canadians were more likely to define Canada's interests within the context of the Empire. (page 100)

Abstract

Canada's military policies between 1935 and 1944 were shaped within a political frame of reference, reflecting Mackenzie King's preoccupation with the preservation of the nation's unity. This study examines the effects which international tension, Canada's participation in the Second World War, and the reinforcement crisis in the Canadian Army had on the conduct of Canadian civil-military relations in an effort to understand the Army's subordination to Canada's political context.

To Brigadier General W. Denis Whitaker, DSO and Bar, ED, CD.

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Introduction

William Lyon Mackenzie King once told General McNaughton that "nothing had been more distasteful or disgusting to me" than reading "the reference to conflicts between the civil and the military authorities" in Lloyd George's memoirs.⁽¹⁾ The Prime Minister hoped that Canada's politicians and generals would work in harmony as they conducted the nation's war effort. Since there had been friction between the two spheres of government over several facets of the defence preparations before the outbreak of hostilities, King's hope seems slightly naive. For a nation which shaped its military policies within a political and decidedly unmilitary frame of reference, conflict between the civil and the military authorities appears to have been inevitable.

This study is an attempt to understand the evolution and execution of Canada's military policies between 1935 and 1944, as they affected defence preparations and the administration and employment of the Canadian Army overseas. Through an examination of the civil and the military perspectives which came to bear on the King government's policy decisions, it will be shown that the balance of civil-military relations was heavily weighted in favour of political concerns. The central question under

(1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, JG26, J13, 6 October 1939.

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scrutiny is whether this balance could be altered. Two specific factors which could well have given the generals greater influence, namely: the war and the crisis in the Canadian Army in 1944, will be explored in order to illustrate that the King government's preoccupation with national unity subordinated the military to Canada's political context.

The root of the problem (and it was indeed a problem for the Army) was Mackenzie King's concern that participation in the war would fracture Canada's unity. Myriad pressures developed between and among English and French Canadians over the decision to participate, and later, over the direction the war effort would take. These political pressures influenced the civil authorities to a significant degree and deflating them in order to preserve unity was the Prime Minister's chief priority. King's preoccupation with domestic stability undermined the General Staff's ability to influence defence policies before 1939, and during the war, it led to policies which were often inimical to the Canadian Army's military effectiveness.

The priority the King government was willing to give to the military depended upon its importance to Canada's political context. Before the war, defence preparations were less important than national concerns over autonomy from Great Britain, the Depression, and in Quebec, the prospect of conscription. In consequence, defences were inadequate. This mattered far less to the Prime Minister than his success in

bringing a united Canada into the war. Surprisingly, war did very little to alter the military's subordination to the political context. King's war policies were shaped in response to domestic pressures. If the Army's requirements threatened Canadian unity, the government would not meet them. Domestic stability was the flagship of Canada's military policies between 1935 and 1944.

In Defence of Unity

When Canada declared war on Germany in 1939, Canadian soldiers were equipped with relics from the First World War. Canada's armament industry was embryonic and the nation possessed only the nucleus of the trained officers and soldiers which its army would later require. (1) There was no consensus between the civil and the military arms of government on the nature or the extent of Canada's war effort. Truly, this was a weak military basis for a declaration of war.

Canada did have a system of civil-military relations through which her defence preparations were made. The planning structure was improved between 1935 and 1939, but in spite of this organization it was difficult for the military to persuade the government to act upon its advice in peacetime. Once war was declared, the General Staff was able to maintain control over mobilization and it did get the disposition of forces it had wanted in 1939. Beyond these two areas, however, the military had very little influence on government policy.

It is curious that a government preparing its country for war should have taken so little account of military advice. For the General Staff had urged the development of a munitions

(1) C.P. Stacey. Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War. Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific. (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966) pages 35-36.

industry. It had made repeated requests for larger defence estimates. Most particularly, it had urged the Prime Minister to approve its plans to despatch an expeditionary force overseas in the event of a major war. Mackenzie King's defence policy concentrated instead on home defence.

The most important force which shaped King's defence policy between 1935 and 1939 had a political - and not a military - source. His policy of home defence was partly justified by the pragmatic considerations involved in Canada's isolation from Europe and the relative absence of threats to Canadian territory but, to a very large extent, politics were the basis of all of King's defence considerations. In defence matters, King was guided more by his political than by military advisors. The issue with which the Prime Minister had to deal in the 1930s did not concern how Canadians would respond to the outbreak of war in Europe as much as it concerned how they would respond to Britain's involvement in that war. For if Great Britain were involved, Canada would be bound, particularly by reasons of sentiment, to participate.

To the King Government, the imperial connection - once colonial and later an intangible complex of ancestry, tradition and loyalty - was a contentious issue. There were many Canadians who questioned the validity of sentiment and its accoutrements as

rationales for military contributions to imperial wars.(1) Those Canadians had been antagonized in 1914 when Britain's declaration of war on Germany had automatically committed Canada to war. The limits of their patience were reached in 1917, when the government conscripted Canadians for overseas service in 'Britain's war'. Since the Statute of Westminster (1931) Canada had had the legislative autonomy from Britain to make an independent decision for war - the supreme act of a nation. This autonomy gave additional emphasis to arguments against participation in a major war in which Britain was involved simply because some believed that Canada should act upon her right to remain detached from Europe's problems. The King government in the 1930s would incur the risk of seriously dividing the country if it made a commitment to participation before war erupted. Defence policy was an explosive political issue and the Prime Minister's first concern was to avoid divisiveness.

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expeditionary force overseas because Canadians equated military aid with an army. Before 1939, however, these sentiments were decidedly lacking in force and Mackenzie King's defence policy reflected the the public's apathy. The Prime Minister shaped his military policies by assessing the importance of the military to Canada's domestic stability. This criterion determined the extent to which the military would be able to influence government policies, both before and during the war.

In theory, the conduct of civil-military relations in a democratic state comprises two elements. The first is the maximization of civil power (which makes the military the tool of the government) and the second is the preservation of the nation's security. One theorist, Samuel Huntington, has isolated the functions of soldiers and governments with a view towards explaining the most beneficial state of co-existence between the two sides. The military institutions of any society

are shaped by two forces: a functional imperative stemming from threats to the society's security and a societal imperative arising from the social forces, ideologies and institutions dominant within the society. (1)

The basic problem of civil-military relations, he says, is to enhance the military security of a state without sacrificing

(1) S.P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957) p. 2. For simplicity's sake, I have translated "functional imperatives" and "societal imperatives" into military and civil imperatives.

other social values. (1) Huntington believes the solution is to maximize civilian power at the same time as specifying an independent sphere in which the military can function on a professional basis. (2) This professionalism, as it is called, involves three functions. The military must represent the claims of military security, it must be in a position to advise the government of the nation's security requirements and finally, it must implement "state decisions with respect to military security even if it is a decision which runs violently counter to [its] military judgement." (3) The idea is quite simple. The two spheres are separated in order to permit each side to do the job it best knows how to do.

A problem arises, however, when civilian control is maximized, for this can happen at the expense of military professionalism. The government can have so much power over the

(1) Ibid., p. 3.

(2) Ibid., pp. 80-83.

(3) Ibid., p. 72.

military that its professional sphere is denied.(1) Huntington's definition of civilian control "presupposes a conflict between civilian control and the needs of military security"(2) This was the conflict which played such a large role in the evolution of Canada's military policies before the Second World War.

Canada's system of civil-military relations was developed within the British system. Generally speaking, both systems concentrate authority over the military in the Cabinet. The military chief is subordinate to the responsible minister, who in

(1) Huntington calls this "subjective civilian control", the essence of which is "the denial of an independent military sphere." (page 83) The military becomes the mirror of the state instead of its tool. For the latter to occur, an independent military sphere is granted by the government which "militarizes the military". (Ibid)

Huntington's work is important, in that it breaks down the functions of government and the military in democratic states and it includes a study of the nuances which an executive or parliamentary system lend to civil-military relations. Other theorists also address the problem of minimizing the military's power, but they do so by comparing democratic with totalitarian systems. S.B. Finer, in The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962) concentrates on instances where the military will intervene in the civil sphere (something Finer sees as a reaction against civil control). Bengt Abrahamson, in Military Professionalization and Political Power (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972) discusses the enormous power potential of the military and urges its minimization.

(2) Huntington, pp. 163-164 and 186-188.

turn is under the Prime Minister.(1) During this period, the systems differed in the way in which civilian control was maximized. In Canada, this was achieved by virtually ignoring the military's advice (particularly before the war)(2) and by limiting its defence estimates. In Britain, there appears to have been a sharper distinction between the two spheres of government.(3) The effect was the conduct of civil-military relations on the principle that co-operation with the Service Chiefs was essential.(4) This close co-operation was not a significant feature of Canada's civil-military relations.

Like any system, civil-military relations address specific needs according to a nation's particular preoccupations. Britain appears to have integrated its military institutions into

(1) See Huntington, pp. 163-164 and 186-188; Robert Blake, "Great Britain: The Crimean War to the First World War" in Michael Howard, ed. Soldiers and Governments: Nine Studies in Civil-Military Relations (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1957)

and C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970) pp. 67-70.

(2) Stephen Harris, "Or There Would Be Chaos: The Legacy of Sam Hughes and Military Planning in Canada, 1919-1939", Military Affairs, Vol. XLVI, October 1983, pp. 120-126 and, by the same author, "The Canadian General Staff and the Higher Organization of Defence 1919-1939: A Problem of Civil-Military Relations", War and Society, Vol. 1, No.1, May 1985, pp. 83-98. Harris discusses the military's attempts to eliminate undue ministerial interference.

(3) Robert Blake, pp. 49-50.

(4) Rt. Hon. Lord Hankey, Government Control in War: The Lees Knowles Lecture, 1945, (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1945) p. 78.

society effectively, probably because of the persistent threats which had been posed to her security. Modifications to her system, particularly after the Crimean War, were made with a view towards maximizing the military's professionalism under civilian control.(1) The Canadian system also underwent changes, but these were largely concerned with the centralization of authority under a single minister, instead of under the Prime Minister, with little apparent concern for military professionalism.

Military affairs in Canada had once been divided between three departments: the Department of Militia and Defence (1867); the Department of Naval Services (1910) and the Air Board (1919).(2) The National Defence Act of 1922 created the environment within which future civil-military relations would be conducted. The Act unified the direction of the three armed forces under the umbrella of the Department of National Defence and a single minister, who had authority over "all matters relating to defence, including the Militia, the Military, Naval

(1) Before the Crimean War, the Commander-in-Chief was independent of any minister. In 1870 he was subordinated to the Secretary of State for War. The First World War required the complete mobilization of the nation and the necessity of inter-action between the Commander and the government created a problem of government interference in military affairs, as well as the opposite problem. The system was again modified by Winston Churchill, who combined the offices of Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, thereby centralizing authority. At the same time he carried "the Service Chiefs with him" thereby facilitating their access to the government as security advisors. (Robert Blake, pp. 49-50) See also Hankey, pp. 13-21 and Blake, 28-40.

(2) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 67.

and Air Services of Canada."(1) The interaction between the Minister of National Defence and the military was provided for by an Order-in-Council (P.C. 1252) on 22 June 1922 in which the Defence Council, "whose duties were to advise the Minister on all matters of defence", was established.(2) Membership to the Council included the Minister as President and the Deputy Minister as Vice-President. The Chief of the General Staff, Director of Naval Services, Comptroller of the Navy were members and the Adjutant General, Quarter-Master General and the Director of the Canadian Air Force were associates. But, unlike the Army Council in Great Britain, "the Defence Council...had no powers independent of those of the Minister; the political head of the Department had in himself complete legal control of the forces."(3) The Council was not very active, and its "minutes indicate that the Council did not meet at all between 3 December 1930 and 8 July 1936."(4) In 1927, a Joint Staff Committee (re-named the Chiefs of Staff Committee in January, 1939) was set up, composed solely of military officials, making available to the Government "interservice professional advice on Canada's

(1) Ibid.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Ian A. Mackenzie Papers, MG27,111B5, Vol. 37, File D-13, "Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Privy Council 17 July 1936, P.C. 1742."

(3) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments. p. 67.

(4) Ibid. p. 70.

military problems." (1) Unlike Great Britain, which had established the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1904 with the Prime Minister as its head, (2) Canada did not have a system of civil-military relations which provided for consistent inter-action between the Prime Minister and the military until August 1936 when the government established the Canadian Defence Committee. This was the only forum for defence discussions at the highest level of government, and as we will see later, it was not used to its potential.

Huntington's description of patterns of civil-military relations suggests a reason why defence operated at a high level of government in Britain. Generally, civil-military relations in twentieth-century Britain have been based on a pro-military ideology, low military political power and high military professionalism. (3) In contrast, Canada has had an anti-military ideology which participation in the First World War did not alter. At the First Assembly of the League of Nations in 1920, Newton W. Rowell, a Toronto lawyer and member of the Canadian delegation stated "it was European policy, European

(1) Ibid. p. 69.

(2) N. D'Ombraim, War Machinery and High Policy, (London, Oxford University Press, 1973) and F.A. Johnson, Defence by Committee, (London, Oxford University Press, 1960) The CID was formed on the recommendations of the War Office Reconstitution Committee (the Esher Committee). While the Committee suffered from growing pains during its first years, it did become an efficient machine for co-ordinating defence matters.

(3) Huntington, p. 97.

statesmanship, European ambition, that drenched the world with blood and from which we are still suffering and will suffer for generations. Fifty thousand Canadians under the soil of France and Flanders is what Canada paid for European statesmanship trying to settle European problems. I place responsibility on the few; but nevertheless it is European." Many Canadians believed their country had paid enough.(1) In Stacey's words, "Canada is an unmilitary community. Warlike her people have often been forced to be; military they have never been."(2) The government, ever responsive to the will of its unmilitary electorate, kept its defence estimates at an abysmally low level, thus effectively curtailing the military's development in accordance with the public will.(3)

(1) G.M. Carter, The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions, 1919-1939, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1947) p. 36.

(2) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 3. See also G.F.G. Stanley, Canada's Soldiers: The Military History of an Unmilitary People (Toronto: Macmillan and Company, 1967); Desmond Morton, Canada and War (Toronto: Butterworth and Company Ltd., 1981); and James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. 1: From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964).

(3) Defence estimates do tell the story. In 1924, Canada's defence expenditures per capita were \$1.46. Australia was spending \$3.30, the United States, \$6.51, Great Britain, \$23.04 and France, \$24.66. Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 4. By 1935, little had changed. Canada was spending only \$1.19 per head, while Germany was spending \$5.29, the United States, \$6.31 and Great Britain, \$10.48. Debates, Canadian House of Commons, Second Session, Vol. 1, 1937, p. 900.

II

How did the Canadian military establishment perceive its responsibilities in light of this anti-military ideology? The First World War had moved the military out of the shadows of obscurity, giving the generals a fairly solid conviction that the Canadian Corps had been a nation-building force; a symbol of the nation's integrity. As well, the war had turned a chaotically-assembled group of green soldiers into a professional military unit.(1) Peacetime soldiering, with its inter-service rivalries and low defence estimates(2) was a very different situation. The problems did not, however, deter the generals from recognizing the nation's defence obligations and assessing the threats to Canadian security. Believing since 1925 that a major war in which Canada would be bound to participate would erupt in the late 1930s, the military was anxious to make the

(1) See Stephen Harris, "Canadian Brass: The Growth of the Canadian Military Profession, 1860-1919", (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation) Duke University, 1979; John Swettenham, McNaughton, Vol. 1 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968) and Desmond Morton, A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

(2) Norman Hillmer and William McAndrew, "The Cunning of Restraint: General J.H. MacBrien and the Problems of Peacetime Soldiering", Canadian Defence Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. 4, Spring 1979, pp. 40-47, and Stephen Harris, "The Canadian General Staff".

appropriate preparations.(1)

The General Staff believed the contingency of a major overseas war was the "most serious or important military issue for which we in this country require to be organized."(2) There were other contingencies for which the military also wanted to prepare: the direct defence of Canada, the defence of Canadian neutrality in a war between the United States and Japan, and a minor war overseas.(3) None of these could be ruled out entirely, but they ranked second in military importance to the despatch of an expeditionary force overseas.

The General Staff had arrived at the conclusion that a Canadian expeditionary force would be required as the result of foreign policy decisions taken by the civil authorities. In the 1920's, military planners had attempted to make their defence schemes compatible with foreign policy assumptions. Schemes No. 1 and No. 2 were plans for the direct defence of Canadian territory and the protection of Canadian neutrality. In the early 1930's, as a result of the Treaty of Washington (which placed Canada directly in the American sphere of defence) and the stabilization of Anglo-American and Canadian relations:

it was decided to check the work which had

(1) M.A. Pope, Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-General Maurice A. Pope C.B.M.C. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) p. 140.

(2) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 30, File X-4, "Canadian Liaison Letter No. 4, 31 December 1932".

(3) Ibid.

been proceeding at [Canadian] headquarters in connection with plans and means for the direct defence of Canada and to devote the time, energy and means at our disposal to military problems not only those likely to arise but those more susceptible to solution.(1)

The United States did not pose a very real threat to Canada any longer, and given the nation's geographical isolation from Europe, "there was no need for Canada to maintain even the cadre of the force requisite to the direct defence of the [country]." (2) Defence of Canada's neutrality in a war between the United States and Japan was deemed a possibility "even though perhaps not an imminent one." (3)

Having defined the risks to Canada's security, the General Staff was powerless to make the appropriate preparations. The situation which faced the generals is best described by a series of letters between J.L. Ralston (Minister of National Defence in 1928) and Brigadier-General A.G.L. McNaughton (head of Military District No. 11, Esquimalt). Ralston wrote to McNaughton to ask him to report to Ottawa and become the Chief of the General

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 30, Canadian Liaison Letter No. 4. See also Stanley, p. 337.

(2) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 29, "Report of the Chief of the General Staff, 28 May 1935.

(3) PAO, Mackenzie Papers, "Canadian Liaison Letter No. 4".

Staff, the highest army position in Canada.(1) His letter set the stage for defence planning in Canada in the inter-war years.

You know the situation here - it is difficult but not impossible, I think - military activity as such is not popular in Canada generally... We are both young but I don't think either of us will be inclined to such exuberance of youth as to tear down the established practice and policy simply for the sake of showing activity or just to bring about a change and call it progress.(2)

In short, McNaughton was requested to tread softly. In light of the public's intolerance for military activity there was nothing to be gained - and everything to lose - by an aggressive approach to defence preparations. McNaughton's reply to Ralston's letter was straightforward in describing his expectations as Chief of the General Staff. He discussed the urgent need for inter-departmental co-operation on defence matters, noting that "one of the departments which we should serve, as the War Office in London serves the Foreign and Dominion and Colonial Offices,

(1) McNaughton's distinguished service during the First World War had led to his appointment, in 1919, to the Otter Committee, whose purpose it was to incorporate units of the Canadian Expeditionary Force into the peace-time Militia. (Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 4). In 1920, McNaughton became the Director of Military Training and Staff Duties and in 1923, he was appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff. McNaughton was a 'soldier-scientist'; a trained engineer and a professional soldier. He served as Chief of the General Staff for two terms, leaving the army in 1935 to become the President of the National Research Council. In 1939, he was recalled, by Mackenzie King, to lead the Canadian Army into the Second World War. (Swettenham, McNaughton, Vol. 1).

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), A.G.L. McNaughton Papers, MG30, E133, Vol. 111, Ralston File, J.L. Ralston to A.G.L. McNaughton, 18 November 1928.

is the Department of External Affairs."(1)

McNaughton then turned to the armed forces and described the action he believed was required:

We need no large standing army nor any large force for very quick mobilization. We need rather to be able to assure the possibility of creating large forces, sea, land and air, on reasonable notice. It follows that a citizen Militia with a small Permanent Force for instructional duties, and possibly on [the Pacific Coast] an effective coast defence organization, is what is required in the way of land forces and if this is so, no radical change in our present system is necessary. We need only modify it to keep pace with the progress in the weapons of war.(2)

McNaughton also called for a concerted examination of Canada's defence requirements, saying that since the war, Canada's forces had developed:

rather haphazardly and I think the time has come for a reconsideration of our requirements. This is of course a matter of high government policy and one which I imagine will be particularly difficult to define, but until it is defined, or at any rate indicated, it is almost impossible to be sure that we are creating the force which the Government's policy requires.(3)

These three points: co-operation with the Government, supply, and the definition of a government defence policy, were essential to military planning before the war. From them sprang a number of other concerns, including the re-organization of the militia, the

(1) Ibid. McNaughton to Ralston, 25 November 1928.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

institution of defence planning structures in the government and the development of defence schemes which would ensure the efficient mobilization of the armed forces when war erupted.

The scheme for the re-organization of the militia grew out of work which the Otter Committee of 1919 had done to organize Canada's land forces. The Committee had proposed an organization of 11 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions (300,000 all ranks) as the maximum strength Canada could maintain in a war on Canadian territory for two years. In the event that an expeditionary force would be required, the Committee determined that Canada could support 6 infantry and 1 cavalry divisions. (1) The size of the peace-time establishment had been determined by calculating the number of "males free from physical or mental defects which would dis-qualify them from training. Assuming an average of three seasons' training gives an Active Militia of approximately 225,000 all ranks. This is sufficient personnel for 11 infantry and 2 cavalry divisions on peace establishment." (2) McNaughton had calculated the size of the Expeditionary Force by considering the following factors:

For a force operating overseas, questions of transport and supply become the limiting factors on strength, also the average strength must be calculated so that in a protracted campaign the supply of reinforcements will not be depleted. It is

(1) Swettenham, Vol. 1, p. 189.

(2) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 109, Otter Committee File, Memorandum on the Organization of Canada into Military Districts, A.G.L. McNaughton, 1921.

also considered that with the existing population and the reasonable increase which may be expected in the future, the strength of the Expeditionary Force should not exceed 6 Infantry and 1 Cavalry Divisions, with the necessary proportion of Corps and Army troops. Under the political and strategical conditions which would make possible the despatch of an Expeditionary Force of this size, the forces for Home Defence could be reduced to the necessary training units and Fortress Garrisons. (1)

As it turned out, this authorized strength did not reflect realistically the demographic and financial support Canada's land forces could expect.

Lack of funds for training and equipment had made it impossible to bring the peacetime force to anywhere near its authorized strength. "All that could be done in these circumstances was to seek to train a nucleus of leaders and specialists." (2) Further, the inflated paper organization of the militia did not provide a balanced force. Prior to the Disarmament Conference of 1932, General McNaughton attempted to re-align Canada's peace establishment with a force that was more appropriate to modern warfare. He proposed a reduction of the establishment from 15 divisions to 7 (perhaps not coincidentally, the size of the projected expeditionary force) and units were to be spread out "across the land in proportion to the density of population and the dominant occupational characteristics in the

(1) Ibid.

(2) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 5.

various districts."(1) As McNaughton later argued, "our present Peace establishment is unbalanced; it contains an excess of infantry and cavalry units, but it lacks a due and proper proportion of artillery and other ancillary units."(2) Nothing was accomplished, however, until 1936.

The Depression of the 1930s made it very difficult for McNaughton to achieve many of his objectives. Although military works were disguised under the Unemployment Relief Project, only work concerning the Air Force made much progress.(3) The military was left largely alone and their energies were devoted towards producing defence appreciations, contingency schemes, and plans for the re-organization of the militia, all of which were ignored by the Government.(4) The effect on Canada's defences was critical. In 1935, McNaughton described the state of ~~Canada's~~ equipment and ammunition, noting that:

The matter is shortly disposed of. Except as regards rifles and rifle ammunition, partial stocks of which were inherited from the Great War - there are none.

1. ...there is not a single modern

(1) Swettenham, p. 268.

(2) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 29, File X-4, A.G.L. McNaughton, "The Requirements of Canadian Defence: A Review of the Present Position, 12 November 1935.

(3) Swettenham, pp. 269-286 and Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. 1, From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964) pp.62-148.

(4) As General Pope wrote, "[d]uring the depression, the Government, beset by the problem of maintaining national solvency, was, understandably, quite immovable. From my modest point of view, it seemed to be even unapproachable." Pope, p. 9.

anti-aircraft gun of any sort in Canada.

2. The stocks of field gun ammunition on hand represent 90 minutes' fire at normal rates for the field guns inherited from the Great War and which are now obsolescent.

3. The coast defence armament is obsolescent and, in some cases, defective...

4. About the only article of which stocks are held is harness, and this is practically useless...

5. There are only 25 aircraft of service type in Canada, all of which are obsolescent except for training purposes... Not a single machine is of a type fit to employ in active operations.

6. Not one service airbomb is held in Canada. (1)

The military was a force without sufficient men, without equipment, and seemingly, without the influence to correct the problems.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to defence planning, besides fiscal restraints, was the utter lack of a government-sanctioned defence policy. When McNaughton had written to Ralston in 1928, he had indicated that the General Staff had been working within a policy vacuum. Until the government chose to define its defence priorities, it would be difficult for the military to make much progress with defence preparations. McNaughton's successor, Major-General E.C. Ashton, once observed that "the Department of National Defence has, for the greater part of its existence, been obliged to act as best as it could without a clear-cut statement

(1) A.G.L. McNaughton, "The Requirements of Canadian Defence", 12 November 1935.

of ministerial policy."(1) A defence policy would have enabled the General Staff to base its recommendations on "some idea as to what the government might accept."(2) For this reason, McNaughton urged the formation of a Defence Committee - a forum for defence considerations in the government - in his 1935 review.(3) Until the government accepted the General Staff's view that a policy should be articulated, however, Canada's military establishment would be hamstrung.

The military was faced with another problem during the inter-war years. This was not an immediate concern, but rather an anticipation of a problem which might arise when and if the government became interested in defence planning. While the General Staff was frustrated by the government's apathy, it did not want the government to over-compensate with undue ministerial interference in military affairs. For the General Staff, the problem was how to exercise greater influence over policy making without challenging the civil authority. The military's motives for this were simple. Between 1914 and 1916, the military had fought against the interference of the Minister of Militia, Sir Sam Hughes.

A self proclaimed expert in all things military, [Hughes] brushed aside the general staff's contingency plans, imposed his own

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 29, "The Defence of Canada: A Survey of Military Requirements", 10 January 1938.

(2) Pope, p. 91.

(3) McNaughton, "The Requirements of Canadian Defence", 12 November 1935.

policy for the organization of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, then exercised an erratic personal control over the contingents fighting in France. (1)

The chaos Hughes imposed on the Canadian militia is legendary, (2) and the General Staff was determined that it not be repeated in the next war. The military's professional credibility would not withstand the ruinous effects of ministerial interference again. As was said in 1927, "last time we had Sam Hughes to blame; next time we shall be the culprits." (3)

Stephen Harris' work on the development of professionalism in the Canadian Army addresses the way in which the military hoped to solve this problem.

Headquarters turned to a well-developed program of contingency planning as the... best hope of increasing Canada's readiness for war while reducing the likelihood of potentially ruinous ministerial influence. (4)

Ultimately, four schemes evolved, addressing every possible contingency the military might face. The defence schemes were intended to be so comprehensive "as to dissuade ministers from

- (1) Stephen Harris. "Or There Would Be Chaos:" p.120.
- (2) See also Desmond Morton. A Peculiar Kind of Politics., pp. 24-42.
- (3) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Records of the Department of National Defence, RG24, Vol. 2679, Col. J. Sutherland Brown, D.M.O. and I. to Chief of Staff, 4 January 1927.
- (4) Stephen Harris. "Or There Would Be Chaos", p. 121. Defence Scheme No. 1 - War Against the United States. Defence Scheme No. 2 - Canadian Neutrality in a Japanese-United States War. Defence Scheme No. 3 - Expeditionary Force and Home Defence in a Major War. Defence Scheme No. 4 - Minor Empire Crisis. Stacey. Six Years of War. pp. 30-31.

improvising in the heat of a crisis and to convince them to accept the military's plans." (1) The schemes were by no means an attempt to usurp civil authority, for the military accepted civil supremacy and each defence scheme carried the qualifying phrase "assuming this to be the policy of H.M. Government in Canada." (2) Accepting civil supremacy did not mean that the military would attenuate its professional responsibilities.

Military policy should be designed so as to obtain, if possible, the wholehearted support of the government and by the co-operating departments of the government and framed so as to meet as little hostile criticism as possible from the opposition; it should be designed to have the support of the great bulk of the people or at least the thinking people of the country; and should have the wholehearted support of the army... It is true that a sound military policy might be drawn up by the General Staff and be acceptable to none of the above. This would only mean, however, that governments and people are apathetic or uninterested.... (3)

The defence schemes could not be executed without the government's approval, but that did not mean that in the absence of policy, contingency plans should not exist.

The situation up to 1935 was largely the product of a fundamental contradiction in civil-military relations as conducted in western democracies. As it is described by Bengt

(1) Stephen Harris. "Or There Would Be Chaos", p. 121.

(2) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 30, Memorandum to the Minister from Norman Senior, Secretary, 7 April 1937.

(3) Colonel J. Sutherland Brown to Chief of Staff, 4 January 1927.

Abrahamson:

The state is supposed to be both client and superior (His emphasis) at the same time. The client is assumed to be the ultimate judge of what "treatment" is the most appropriate, and thus at times disapprove of the professional's recommendations. (These potential strains will be attenuated to the extent that the state is willing to make a broad definition of the military's jurisdiction, and/or to the extent that the military group occupies important positions in the councils of government.)(1)

Without a specific jurisdiction, or an inter-active role in government councils, the General Staff was in a difficult position. The generals expected that Canada would be at war within the decade and they also knew that Canada's defences were weak, yet they were unable to influence the government in order to achieve a statement of policy. Until this happened, the General Staff would be in the position of being the technical advisors to an agency which did not acknowledge its need for advice.

(1) Bengt Abrahamson, p. 66.

III

1935 was a turning point in Canadian defence planning. Mackenzie King, returned to the Prime Minister's chair in the general election of that year, had to recognize the need to develop Canada's defences since international tension was escalating. Since defence policy was a contentious political issue, however, he also had to deflect the controversy which improved defences could generate. King faced a problem of some magnitude, for in the election, Canadians had demonstrated their unwillingness to become involved in another war, in spite of the fact that the military situation demanded action.(1) The Prime Minister was by no means unequal to the situation, and by paying close attention to the domestic situation, he was able to bring a united Canada into the war. He did so, however, at the expense of Canada's military preparedness for participation in a war overseas.

Mackenzie King knew full well that if Britain were involved in a major war, Canada would participate. The ties between Britain and Canada were too profound to make neutrality a realistic option. The "intangible bonds of empire would reveal

(1) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 9 and H. B. Neatby, William Lyon Mackenzie King, Vol. 3, Prism of Unity (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976) p. 116.

their strength" and even if they did not, it was highly unlikely that belligerent nations would ignore the "intimate military rapport between the two countries." (1) In King's view, the British Empire was worth defending. The Canadian diplomatic tradition, "as assessed by Macdonald, Laurier and King, sought Canadian development within the bonds of empire. They were nationalists and Anglophiles all, moderates, gradualists and pragmatists who sought to broaden out Canadian freedoms within the British Empire." (2) This was Canada's interest as a developing nation.

With the pursuit of Canadian freedoms came the quest for legislative autonomy from Great Britain. The right to self-government had been won in 1931 and since that time, autonomy became a fundamental component of Canada's external commitments. Its demonstration was the most concrete appearance of Canada's ability to act within the dictates of her national interests. Canada could go to war to help Britain, but only if such a commitment reflected Canadian -and not British - interests. Autonomy, therefore, was the vehicle for national consensus. Mackenzie King "repeatedly described Canadian autonomy as a prerequisite for any major commitment in external

(1) J.L. Granatstein, "The 'Man of Secrets' in Canada, 1934", Dalhousie Review, LI (Winter) 1971, p. 511. and Norman Hillmer, "Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military 'Alliance' in the 1930s", International Journal, XXXIII, 3, September 1978, pp. 588-612.

(2) Norman Hillmer, "The Canadian Diplomatic Tradition", unpublished paper, January 1985, p. 5.

affairs. Without autonomy he believed that national agreement on such a commitment would be virtually impossible; only with autonomy would a national consensus be feasible."(1) Autonomy and defence fit together in a very specific way. King believed that "any commitment as to the supreme act of a nation should be made by a self-governing people through their own government and Parliament in the light of the actual circumstances at the time a specific decision had to be made."(2) In other words, Parliament would decide whether or not Canada would participate in war.

Without consensus, controversy could erupt which could seriously divide the country. French and English Canada could clash if any appearance was given that Canada would make a commitment to Britain which rubbed against the grain of Canadian interests. Each national decision of consequence needed to have the support, "or at least the acquiescence" of as many Canadians,

(1) H.B. Neatby, "Mackenzie King and National Unity" in Harvey L. Dyck and H. Peter Krosby, eds., Empire and Nation: Essays in Honour of Frederic H. Soward (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969) p. 58.

(2) J.W. Pickersgill, The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 1, 1939-1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) p. 11.

from as many geographical areas of Canada as possible.(1) Since it was unlikely that many Canadians would have supported participation in 1935, King first had to avoid the "crystallization of conflicting attitudes which would make an eventual consensus impossible. But public opinion must also be guided and shaped so that if Britain did become involved in a major war, most Canadians would be prepared to accept the policy of participation."(2)

King had no hesitation about defining the nation's primary interest. It was, of course, national unity. During the Ethiopian Crisis of 1935, King said:

Our domestic situation must be considered first, and what will serve to keep Canada united. To be obligated to go to war would force an issue between imperialism and independence. At all costs, this must, if at all possible, be avoided."(3)

National unity remained the basic tenet of King's administration, both before and during the war. He believed his party was the

(1) Ibid. p. 59 ; J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell "A Self-Evident National Duty: Canadian Foreign-Policy, 1935-1939", Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, IV, January 1975, pp. 213-230; Escott Reid, "Canada and the Threat of War: A Discussion of Mr. King's Foreign Policy", University of Toronto Quarterly, VI, January 1937, pp. 243-244; Norman Hillmer, "The Pursuit of Peace: Mackenzie King and the 1937 Imperial Conference", in John English and J. Stubbs, eds., Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate (Toronto: Macmillan and Company, 1978) p. 153; and W.A.B. Douglas, "Why Does Canada Have Armed Forces?" International Journal, XXX, 2, Spring 1975, pp. 261-265.

(2) Neatby, "Mackenzie King and National Unity", p. 62.

(3) King Diary, 29 October 1935, in Neatby, Prism of Unity, p. 140.

"party of national unity"(1) and all of his policies, domestic and external alike, would be geared towards cementing the Canadian partnership. Public controversy had to be avoided. Because of this, there was virtually no aspect of King's administration which could be separated from the domestic context.(2)

In order to avoid controversy, debates over Canada's external relations had to be avoided, as did the source of those debates; public commitments.(3) Commitments would generate debate, in Parliament and in the country. As a further measure, King tried to ensure that debates on Canada's external relations were kept to a minimum in the House of Commons. To a degree, King's reticence to discuss external affairs in the House was

(1) Ibid. p. 6.

(2) Ibid. pp. 173-174.

(3) Canada's performance at Imperial Conferences gives evidence of a consistent rejection of outward shows of commitment. J.L. Granatstein and R. Bothwell. "A Self-Evident National Duty": Canadian Foreign Policy, 1935-1939", Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, IV, January, 1975, p. 213. M. Beloff. "The Empire Commonwealth Between the Wars", Collected Papers on the Dominions Between the Wars. (University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, October, 1970-March, 1971) No. 13. p. 3. D.C. Watt. "Imperial Defence and Foreign Policy", Journal of Commonwealth and Political Studies R. Cook. "A Canadian Account of the 1926 Imperial Conference", Journal of Commonwealth and Political Studies III, March, 1975, p. 55. K. Middlemas. "The Effect of Dominion Opinion on British Foreign Policy", Collected Papers on the Dominions Between the Wars. (University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, October, 1970-March, 1971) No. 31, p. 47. R. Tamchina, "In Search of Common Causes: The Imperial Conference of 1937." Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History

facilitated by the Members' disinterest in the subject.(1) It also stemmed from his own view that "the least that is said means the least stirring up in the Commons and the Press and in the minds of the people."(2) Nor did King believe that his administration "received any new sense of direction, let alone any strong encouragement, from debates in Parliament on external relations."(3) During the Rhineland crisis, King requested members "to forbear, if they can see their way so to do, from proffering any request which might provoke discussion in our country at this time."(4) In spite of mounting international tension in 1938, "[f]oreign affairs had been almost ignored

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- (1) The tendency was more towards a concentration on domestic affairs. One of King's most influential advisors, O.D. Skelton (Under-secretary of State for External Affairs) believed that "It]o Canada in the inter-war years had fallen an opportunity to take stock of itself and to consider fully and relatively freely its own interests and role in the world." Norman Hillmer, "The Anglo-Canadian Neurosis: The Case of O.D. Skelton", in P. Lyon, ed., Britain and Canada: A Survey of Changing Relationships (London: Frank Cass, 1976) p. 80. In another article, Hillmer wrote that "King and Skelton believed, like Laurier, that Canadians should not seek influence and prestige in the world through external commitments and alliances, as the Conservatives had done. Instead, the emphasis in external affairs must be on things domestic - national unity and national development." Norman Hillmer, "O.D. Skelton: The Scholar Who Set A Future Pattern", International Perspectives, September/October 1973, p. 47.
- (2) King Diary, March 1938, in Neatby, Prism of Unity, p. 273.
- (3) James A. Gibson. "Mr. Mackenzie King and Canadian Autonomy, 1921-1946." Canadian Historical Association Report, 1951, p. 16.
- (4) Debates, Canadian House of Commons, 1936, Vol. II, page 1332.

during the session....King...had deliberately tried to avoid any discussion of [the] menacing developments because he saw no possibility of influencing events abroad and no possibility of consensus at home."(1) Creating a forum for public discussion on external affairs would have compelled the King Government to adopt commitments, if not to a cause, then to a policy. Such commitments were impolitic.

King's most reliable means of controlling potential controversy was to ensure himself as much control as possible over the functions of government. Retaining control was a relatively simple matter.

King combined the positions of Prime Minister and foreign minister for all but the last two years of his long sojourn in power. He did not do so because he felt foreign affairs to be sufficiently important to warrant another Cabinet minister holding the portfolio but precisely because he felt foreign policy to be too serious a matter to be left to foreign ministers.(2)

The retention of control was so essential to King that he often worked alone and avoided his offices so that he would have "greater control of his own time and greater freedom to make his own decisions without undue pressure from others."(3) While he sought advice from his colleagues on external affairs, the number

(1) Neatby. Prism of Unity, p. 276.

(2) J. Eayrs, The Art of the Possible: Government and Foreign Policy in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) p. 24.

(3) Pickersgill, pp.4-5.

of those whom he trusted was small. He consulted almost exclusively with [O.D.] Skelton (1) Next only to Skelton's, he relied on Lapointe's judgement in all fields and no one completely took the place of either after 1941. (2)

Control over other facets of government was partially determined by the prerogatives of his office. (3) King's style of leadership also worked to give him maximum influence over the decisions taken by his government. His selection of cabinet ministers was a calculated measure to deter rivals, as each of his colleagues was a regional spokesman whose success as the advocate of the interests of their region made them less acceptable in other parts of the country. (4) While his diary entries often remarked on the capability of one or another of his colleagues to succeed him, King's relations with his staff were so mercurial that he was unlikely to sponsor any man above another. (5) Perhaps even more significant than his relationship with his colleagues was King's personal belief that he was the

(1) Arnold Heeney, (B.D. Heeney, ed.) The Things That are Caesar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) p. 50.

(2) Pickersgill, p. 7.

(3) The Prime Minister calls the meetings of Cabinet and Council, settles the agenda and presides over the meetings. He can select and dismiss ministers and he has the right to dissolve Parliament. Peter W. Hogg, Constitutional Law of Canada. (Toronto: The Carswell Company Limited, 1977) p. 146.

(4) Neatby, Prism of Unity, p. 15.

(5) This, with the possible exception of Ernest Lapointe, King's Quebec Lieutenant.

only one capable of leading the country. In February, 1939, he wrote, "however inadequate in a multitude of ways, I nevertheless can keep Canada on a steadier keel than possibly any one likely to succeed at the present time." (1)

Criticisms of King's leadership posed no problems for the Prime Minister. Usually, they were an indication that the government had antagonized members of the Canadian partnership. Since "no political crisis could shake King's conviction that an acceptable agreement was possible" (2) antipathy towards his Government required only a greater effort at compromise and mediation for its resolution. His cabinet was Canada writ small and King realized that "opposition from his colleagues usually reflected the opposition to be expected from the public." (3) Since it was essential to keep Canada united, so was it imperative that his Government speak with unanimity. If it could not, then the issue at hand had not been resolved satisfactorily and the dissension within the Party could, if made public, easily fuel dissension in the country. The prerogatives of King's office allowed him to exercise the necessary control over the issues which would be discussed, the time at which they would be raised, and the method by which they would be despatched.

(1) King Diary, 7 February 1939 in Neatby, Prism of Unity, p. 321.

(2) Ibid., p. 6.

(3) Pickersgill; p. 7.

All the control in the world could not keep defence from becoming a political issue of some significance in the late 1930s, however, because the rapidly deteriorating international situation became more and more compelling in Canada. Defence was contentious because, if Canada were to prepare for war along the lines suggested by the General Staff - that is if plans for an expeditionary force were approved by the government - Canadians could perceive that their country was subordinate to British interests. The military had to be a symbol of Canada's security - not Great Britain's. If no defence preparations were made, however, the impression could be given either that the government was relying on stronger nations (Britain and the United States) to defend Canada, or that the country was rejecting the Empire. Neither of these alternatives was acceptable. (1) Something had to be done, however, and in 1936, King struggled to arrive at a policy which would be politically acceptable to as many Canadians as possible.

King's defence policy could not jeopardize national unity, therefore he had to eliminate as many political antagonisms as possible; and there were many. Quite apart from the autonomy issue, King believed that national unity was jeopardized by large defence estimates and advanced military preparations which anticipated events, thus predisposing the country to a course of action it was not yet ready to accept. Canada's land forces

(1) Neatby, Prism of Unity, pp. 177-181.

posed the most significant threats since they had come to represent expeditionary forces, and with them, conscription. Invoking conscription in 1917 had pitted French and English Canadians against each other, and it was essential that such a debacle be avoided in the next war.(1) Indeed, the conscription question "entirely dominated his thinking on questions of defence"(2) and his defence policy would reflect this. All of these factors gave King a deep-seated and life-long distrust of the Army.(3) and they brought defence fully into the political sphere.

In 1936, King announced a defence policy which prescribed the preparations Canada could make in anticipation of a major war. Early in the year, the Minister of National Defence (Ian Mackenzie) sent King General McNaughton's 1935 memorandum on the state of Canada's defences. When King read the memorandum some months later, he commented to his diary that:

The impression left on my mind was one of the complete inadequacy of everything in the way of defence. It is going to be extremely difficult to do anything effective without a cost which this country cannot bear...I would deserve to be shot, did I not press for immediate action and should war come on with

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- (1) Granatstein and Bothwell, p. 213 and J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp. 60-99.
- (2) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 71.
- (3) R. MacGregor Dawson, The Conscription Crisis of 1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) p. 27.

nothing accomplished and this were revealed.(1)

King was less concerned with the inadequacies of Canada's defences than that his government might be caught sleeping when war was declared. Still, he took the matter to Cabinet, arguing that the government:

owed it to [the] country to protect it in a mad world...both on sea and in the air...[he] stated it was humiliating to accept protection from Britain without sharing in the costs, or to rely on the United States without being willing to at least protect our neutrality(2)

It was indicative of King's fear of conscription that he said nothing about Canada's land forces.

By December, the King Government had finally formulated a defence policy in which it was understood "that we would not try...to protect ourselves against the United States, we would not attempt to spend money for the equipment of an expeditionary force to go overseas; that whatever was done was for Government defence."(3) Defence priorities were ranked in the following order:

1. Fortification of the Pacific Coast prior to the Atlantic Coast.
2. Development of the airforce in priority to the navy and, so far as possible, the navy in priority to the militia.
3. Reorganization and re-equipping the militia as soon as our resources permit us to

(1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, MG26, J13, 26 August 1936.

(2) Ibid. 10 September 1936.

(3) Ibid. 16 December 1936.

facilities for training and none at all for arming troops on mobilization." (1) Ashton's warning that Canada should be self-sufficient was well-founded.

The importance of supply cannot be overestimated - without equipment, Canada's armed forces had no more power than toy soldiers - but the Government knew Canadians would not support the development of a public munitions industry. "It preferred a policy of reliance upon private industry combined with a rigid limitation of profits, a point on which public opinion at this point was very sensitive." (2) In January, 1937, the Prime Minister appointed an inter-departmental committee headed by O.D. Skelton to "report on control of profits on government armament contracts." (3) But regardless of the importance General Ashton had placed on the completion of the Dominion Arsenal and other government factories for armament production, Skelton's committee was unable "to support such a proposal as being practicable under present conditions in Canada." In the end, only the Filling group at Valcartier was ever completed. (4) For those supplies which Great Britain could not produce, Canada had to rely on private industry. As Stacey notes, however, "[o]nly one really important contract for weapons was placed in Canada

(1) Stacey. Six Years of War. p. 20

(2) Ibid. p. 29.

(3) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments. p. 101.

(4) Stacey. Six Years of War. p. 22.

for ourselves is simply to be lacking in self-respect as a nation.(1)

Canada's defences, King said, had been neglected, and it was now time to make the deficiencies good.

King stressed that "what we are doing, we are doing for Canada and for Canada alone...we believe in this way we can make the most effective contribution towards the security of all countries that may have like institutions, like ideals, and principles of freedom similar to our own."(2) Thus, he appealed to as many Canadians as possible:

What we have sought to do is to bring down estimates which would commend themselves generally as reasonable to the Canadian people... If we have not proposed more, if we have not proposed less, it is because of that guiding principle, we have sought to keep the country united.(3)

King's views on defence before he announced his policy had made it likely that defence would be predicated on civil imperatives. His statement to Parliament merely confirmed this.

It was, as a statement by King's Minister of National Defence (Ian Mackenzie) at the 1937 Imperial Conference indicated, a policy which reflected, above all, the government's concern for domestic stability.

1. Canadian public opinion supported the present defence policy of the Government of Canada.

(1) Ibid. p. 1056.

(2) Ibid. p. 1058.

(3) Ibid. p. 1054.

far as possible self-sufficing in the production of all forms of military and airforce armament and equipment if we wish to be able to supply our forces in an emergency. (1) To this end, he recommended the completion of the Filling and Ammunition groups at Valcartier and the establishment of government factories for field and anti-aircraft guns and for rifles and machine guns. Ashton also reiterated the need for a Cabinet Defence Committee and the establishment under this Committee of a number of sub-committees and a secretariat "to inquire into and report on the practical problems concerning Canada which might arise in time of war." (2)

The Government responded to the supply issue by forming a Navy, Army and Air Supply Committee in September, 1936, in order to survey the capabilities of Canadian industry for military production. (3) But the action it took beyond this was limited. Canada could not rely on Great Britain for supplies, defence appropriations were insufficient and Great Britain had her own rearmament to take care of and could not supply Canada with equipment in any quantity. "Of the considerable amount of equipment ordered from England, Canada received before the outbreak of war quantities so small as to afford only very slight

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 29, File X-4, Ashton to Mackenzie, "The requirements of Canadian Defence: A Review of the Position as of April 22, 1936."

(2) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2759, HQS6615, Memorandum, M.A. Pope, 19 November 1940.

(3) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments p. 69.

IV

The way in which the military interpreted King's policy of home defence shows the General Staff's understanding of the King Government's predicament.

The Canadian government does not state that Canada will not go to war at some future date, it merely says that situations will be judged on their merits as they may arise... If Parliament is, as it must be, the deciding authority then a freedom of choice must be retained for that authority. (1)

This position did make it difficult for the General Staff to prepare Canada for the Second World War. Even in the late 1930s, the General Staff could not really identify a direct threat to Canada. The Chiefs of Staff Committee had formally stated in 1929 that invasion from the United States was unthinkable, and that defence against a hostile United States would be impossible. The General Staff did continue to plan for the defence of Canadian neutrality in a war between Japan and the United States. (2) The Royal Navy was still a shield from other invaders. (3) These were facts the General Staff knew full well. King's policy was not directed towards an outside threat, because

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 34, B-30, Draft, "The Problems of Canadian Defence" by "Canuck" (Lt.-Colonel Ken Stuart) 1937.

(2) Harris, "Or There Would Be Chaos:", p. 122.

(3) Neatby, Prism of Unity, p. 180.

none really existed. Instead, his policy identified dis-unity as the greatest threat to Canadian security. As Ian Mackenzie told the delegates at the 1937 Imperial Conference, unity was the key, and only a united Canada could make any worthwhile contribution to the war effort. King's policy of defending Canadian unity, a non-military objective, made it almost impossible for the General Staff to influence significantly the government's defence preparations. Those preparations were, in fact, mostly political and beyond the military sphere.

The government, therefore, had very little way of knowing whether its defence policy met the General Staff's assessment of military imperatives. And, after all, Parliament, and not the military would decide Canada's course of action when war erupted. The generals nevertheless tried to influence policy, and after 1936 they enjoyed more success than in the previous fifteen years or so, partly because of King's increased sensitivity to defence matters and also because the Minister of National Defence had a good deal of sympathy for the Army's objectives. Mackenzie encouraged the development of a government-sanctioned defence planning structure and he acted upon other proposals which the General Staff had been pushing since the 1920s.

In April 1936, Major-General E. C. Ashton, McNaughton's successor as Chief of the General Staff, reviewed Canada's defence preparations and made a number of recommendations to the government. He stressed supply, urging "that we must become as

far as possible self-sufficing in the production of all forms of military and airforce armament and equipment if we wish to be able to supply our forces in an emergency. (1) To this end, he recommended the completion of the Filling and Ammunition groups at Valcartier and the establishment of government factories for field and anti-aircraft guns and for rifles and machine guns. Ashton also reiterated the need for a Cabinet Defence Committee and the establishment under this Committee of a number of sub-committees and a secretariat to inquire into and report on the practical problems concerning Canada which might arise in time of war. (2)

The Government responded to the supply issue by forming a Navy, Army and Air Supply Committee in September, 1936, in order to survey the capabilities of Canadian industry for military production. (3) But the action it took beyond this was limited. Canada could not rely on Great Britain for supplies, defence appropriations were insufficient and Great Britain had her own rearmament to take care of and could not supply Canada with equipment in any quantity. "Of the considerable amount of equipment ordered from England, Canada received before the outbreak of war quantities so small as to afford only very slight

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 29, File X-4, Ashton to Mackenzie, "The requirements of Canadian Defence: A Review of the Position as of April 22, 1936."

(2) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2759, HQS6615, Memorandum, M.A. Pope, 19 November 1940.

(3) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments p. 69.

facilities for training and none at all for arming troops on mobilization." (1) Ashton's warning that Canada should be self-sufficient was well-founded.

The importance of supply cannot be overestimated - without equipment, Canada's armed forces had no more power than toy soldiers - but the Government knew Canadians would not support the development of a public munitions industry. "It preferred a policy of reliance upon private industry combined with a rigid limitation of profits, a point on which public opinion at this point was very sensitive." (2) In January, 1937, the Prime Minister appointed an inter-departmental committee headed by O.D. Skelton to "report on control of profits on government armament contracts." (3) But regardless of the importance General Ashton had placed on the completion of the Dominion Arsenal and other government factories for armament production, Skelton's committee was unable "to support such a proposal as being practicable under present conditions in Canada." In the end, only the Filling group at Valcartier was ever completed. (4) For those supplies which Great Britain could not produce, Canada had to rely on private industry. As Stacey notes, however, "[o]nly one really important contract for weapons was placed in Canada

(1) Stacey. Six Years of War. p. 20

(2) Ibid. p. 29.

(3) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments. p. 101.

(4) Stacey. Six Years of War. p. 22.

before the war began; and this one caused so much political difficulty as to impose a break on progress in military supply." (1) That contract was for the order of 12000 Bren light machine guns, 5000 of which were for Britain and 7000 for Canada. The political difficulty to which Stacey refers is, of course, the infamous 'Bren Gun scandal'. (2) When war was declared, Canada had only 29 of the Bren guns in use. (3) Just as they had in the determination of a defence policy, civil imperatives militated against the Government's support of the military - with the effect that "the peak of Canadian war production was not reached until 1943". (4)

The government did follow up on another of the Chief of the General Staff's recommendations. In August, 1936, King authorized the formation of a Canadian Defence Committee (later known as the Defence Committee of the Cabinet). This committee, intended to be the Canadian equivalent of "Britain's Committee of

(1) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments. p. 101.

(2) See Lt.-Col. G.A. Drew, Maclean's Magazine, 1 September 1938. This article criticized the provisions of the Bren gun contract between the Canadian Government and the John Inglis Company and sparked a Royal Commission to investigate the claims. The Commission found no evidence of corruption, but the damage had already been done in the public's mind. Report of the Royal Commission on the Bren Machine Gun Contract: Hon. Henry Hague Davis, Commissioner, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1939).

(3) Stacey. Six Years of War. p. 20.

(4) Ibid. p. 36.

Imperial Defence"(1) was expected by the military to be the forum from which defence problems could be discussed at a high political level. The Prime Minister chaired the Committee and the Ministers of National Defence, Finance and Justice were members. The military had always believed that such a committee would help to create inter-departmental co-operation. For Mackenzie King, however, this was only one of the benefits of his new Committee. It existed also as a visible "earnest [of the Government's] intention to give serious attention to defence problems."(2) It was also used as another means of controlling the military.

In King's Defence Estimates speech in February, 1937, he discussed the institution of the Canadian Defence Committee.

Knowing that there would be the criticism that officers of the Department of National Defence were seeking to increase their own importance and to enlarge unduly the scope of the defence forces... I suggested to my colleagues with the approval of the Minister of National Defence, that we should have a special committee of the cabinet to take up with the Minister and the officials from his department the whole question of defence estimates... I did that for the reason I have mentioned, but even more for the reason that having regard to the world situation, I thought it important that members of the cabinet should have the fullest possible information with respect to the general defence services.(3)

(1) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2759, HQS6615, M.A. Pope, Memorandum, 8 September 1939.

(2) Stacey. Six Years of War. p. 9.

(3) Debates, 19 February 1937, p. 1051.

The importance King placed on providing cabinet ministers with information on defence matters was not borne out by the use the Prime Minister made of the Committee. As Colonel Pope of the General Staff reported, "so far as I am aware this Cabinet Committee has never functioned, other than to hear the Chiefs of Staff put forward their requests for defence estimates." (1) King did not really intend the Committee to function otherwise, which says a great deal about his perception of civil-military relations. It did not exist on an inter-active level, it simply provided control, through estimates, to ensure the military's ability to influence policy would be minimized. The Committee met only six times prior to the war. (2)

The military also requested that a number of sub-committees be established under the aegis of the Canadian Defence Committee to study the whole complex of problems with which all departments of the government would have to face during the war. As General Ashton said, "defence is not simply a matter of providing armaments and men. It comprises that much wider field of preparation which embraces the activities of each and every

(1) M.A. Pope, Memorandum, 8 September 1939.

(2) The parallel between the Canadian Defence Committee and Britain's use of the Committee of Imperial Defence prior to the First World War is striking. With the Prime Minister as chair, his inclination towards defence matters was crucial to the effectiveness of the Committee. See J.P. Mackintosh, "The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defence Before 1914". English Historical Review, 1962.

department of government."(1) Progress in attracting the Government's interest was slow.

At the 1937 Imperial Conference, Ian Mackenzie had told the delegates that "the setting up of the...Sub-Committees of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet had been authorized."(2) The sub-committees had been approved by Council(3) but as Colonel Pope said in 1939, "[t]hese announcements, I think may, not uncharitably, be termed a bit of window-dressing. The subject was further canvassed in the Autumn of 1937 and early Winter of 1938(4) and definitive action took place on the 14th March, 1938, by Order-in-Council P.C. 531."(5)

The most important of these sub-committees was the Committee on Defence Co-ordination, which produced a Government War Book. "By May 1939 the book had been completed in provisional form. It

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- (1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 30, Ashton to Mackenzie, 14 October 1937.
- (2) J.A. Munro, ed., Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 6, (Ottawa, Department of External Affairs, 1972) No. 146, 24 May 1937.
- (3) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2759, HQS6615, Crerar, D.M.O. and I., Memorandum to CGS, 30 July 1938.
- (4) Colonel Crerar to Deputy Minister. 14/3/38: "I am fully aware of the fact that the setting up of these inter-departmental committees has engaged your persistent effort, but I feel constrained to ask, in view of recent grave events, and of the apparently endless delay in obtaining the necessary action whether the Minister might not be moved to approach the Prime Minister again on this matter." PAC, RG24, Vol.2759, File HQS6615.
- (5) Memorandum, M.A. Pope, 8 September 1939.

was none too soon. The book was very valuable when war broke out, only four months later."(1) But the sub-committees' goal to involve every department in war planning was undermined, largely because, as General Pope noted, the committees

were composed solely of permanent officials. As I knew that the Cabinet in England attached the greatest importance to this business of defence preparation and that over there members of the Government sat as chairmen of a number of the sub-committees of the parent Committee of Imperial Defence I more than once suggested that it would be advantageous in every way if some of our ministers could be moved to direct the activities of similar committees at work in Canada. But to no avail.(2)

The military tried to involve O.D. Skelton in the sub-committees as general secretary, knowing the influence of the Department of External Relations, but Skelton declined and the task fell to Maurice Pope, then a Colonel on the General Staff.(3) Even in 1938, with war fast approaching, it was difficult to generate Government interest in defence and without that interest, the military could never be intimately involved in defence planning. King's failure to foster co-ordinated defence planning by his political and military advisors meant that with the rapidly growing urgency to develop defence plans to meet the contingency of a European war, the impetus for planning had to come from the military establishment. Without the government's input, of

(1) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 70.

(2) Pope, p. 127.

(3) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2759, HQS6615, Memorandum, Joint Staff Committee, 22 February 1938.

course, such plans could hardly be developed to their best advantage.

In 1936, the government had made an important concession to the General Staff and this involved the re-organization of the militia. First proposed in 1932, the re-organization was approved at the first meeting of the Canadian Defence Committee on 26 August 1936. The plan had political merits which easily convinced the Prime Minister that "it would be better to have a smaller and more efficient force in Canada than a large and ill-equipped and ill-trained organization." (1) The re-organization distributed military units across Canada on a geographic basis, ensuring that no region would have to contribute more men than another. (2) Although enacting the plan had its difficulties (3) the fact that no one region could be discriminated against was a persuasive aspect of the plan. The re-organization also served a military imperative, since the approved size of Canada's land forces was now commensurate with the General Staff's conception of the expeditionary force which Canada could send overseas when war erupted.

(1) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2759, HQS6615, Major-General Ashton, CGS, Memorandum, "Canadian Defence Committee, 26 August 1936.

(2) Pope, pp. 88-89.

(3) George Drew wrote that "Ian Mackenzie does deserve credit for actively carrying out the plan of re-organization. I know it has taken courage to carry out...because units with long records of efficient service have been forced to merge their identity with other units." George Drew to R. Finlayson, 4 January 1937, cited in James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. 11, Appeasement and Rearmament (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965) pp. 141-142.

The military's stamps on the formation and execution of the Government's defence policy thus included the formation of a Canadian Defence Committee and its sub-committees, the Supply Committee's survey of industry, and the better-late-than-never Bren gun contract and the re-organization of the militia. Most of these concessions to the military served more the function of an appearance of concern over defence by the Government and less a contribution to the substance of defence planning. In this regard, the General Staff could accomplish very little.

In January 1937, the Chief of the General Staff wrote to the Defence Minister, stating:

As matters stand at present, this country, in my opinion, is incapable of fulfilling the responsibility for its own local defence... Should a world war break out...and before certain of our essential preparations are completed we should require to rely on assistance being immediately provided by Great Britain or...the United States...the Militia...will remain an inefficient force, incapable of meeting any enemy with modern equipment, until the marked deficiencies in its own equipment and in its training have been made good.(1)

In 1938, the Chief of the General Staff reiterated his position, saying that "a very serious gap continues to exist between the Government's defence policy...and the action which it has so far

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 29, File X-4, Memorandum, CGS to the Minister. "The Requirements of Canadian Defence: A Review of the Position as of January 1, 1937".

been possible to take to implement it." (1) In July of the same year, Major-General Ashton concluded another report with the same sort of pessimism:

While the summary of progress... shows that there has been considerable and unquestionable improvement over the alarming state of affairs which obtained in 1935, it also clearly indicates that the long-term policy of gradual improvement of our defences, so far pursued by the Government, has up to date actually made but little change in our comparatively defenceless position... (2)

Mackenzie King had defined civil-military relations in terms of limits to the autonomy of the General Staff with consequent limits to decision-making powers and the relegation of military imperatives to second place. By so doing, his defence policy approached military bankruptcy. The General Staff tried to work within these limits, but in the end, they became entirely unacceptable. At this point, Ian Mackenzie became an important ally to the General Staff.

The announcement of King's defence policy in 1936 had helped to improve the government's planning structures for war. It had not done anything to assist the military in preparing the nation for the likeliest contingency Canada would face when war was declared. That, of course, was the despatch of an expeditionary force overseas. Here, the General Staff's contingency plan,

(1) *Ibid.* CGS to Minister. "The Defence of Canada: A Survey of Militia Requirements, 10/1/38.

(2) *Ibid.* Ashton to the Minister, "Canadian Defence Requirements" 15 July 1938.

Defence Scheme No. 3 was very important. In defence planning:

the usual procedure is to define policy and to build defensive structure accordingly. In Canada, the structure evolved on the "Topsy" principle and present policy was formulated and expressed long after the structure had been in existence. It is only natural, therefore, that policy and structure [did] not exactly coincide... (1)

Since the military's efforts had been directed towards preparing for an overseas war, King's announcement of policy:

forced a hurried reevaluation of all the defence schemes, and especially of Defence Scheme No. 3, which up to then had been aimed exclusively at achieving an orderly mobilization for overseas service. As Ashton saw it the staff had three options. It could broaden the scope of Defence Scheme No. 2; it could draft a new plan for the defence of both coasts; or, by changing the language of Defence Scheme No. 3, it could make that plan more acceptable to the government without sacrificing the work already done to prepare for another war in Europe. Inasmuch as Europe was his strategic priority, the Chief of the General Staff chose the later course. (2)

As Ashton told Ian Mackenzie in August, 1936, "The equipment and maximum strength of our land force for such responsibilities should not be expected to exceed those required for local defence." (3) Thus the relationship of future defence preparations would not be incompatible with the revised Defence Scheme No. 3.

(1) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 43, B-30, K. Stuart, "The Problems and Requirements of Canadian Defence", 19 January 1939.

(2) Harris, "Or There Would Be Chaos", page 124.

(3) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, MG26, J4, Vol. 157, Ashton to Mackenzie, August 25, 1936. "Requirements of National Defence. Report of the CGS".

Defence Scheme No. 3 had been in the books in various forms since 1926, and had originally been approved in principle by Bennett's Minister of Defence.(1) In order to make the Scheme politically acceptable in 1937, "increased attention was given to local defence and internal security and the body formerly envisaged as a purely expeditionary force was re-designated the 'Mobile Force'.(2) The Mobile Force was to be employed during enemy landings on Canadian territory, in the event that the local forces were unable to repel such attacks. The Mobile Force would also provide the basis of an expeditionary force, should the Government decide to use Canadian troops in that manner. As C.P. Stacey comments, however, "the expeditionary role, though officially secondary to that of local defence, was far more likely to be the one the force would play in a major emergency; and most people concerned with the Scheme doubtless knew it."(3) Stacey notes further that since the likelihood of direct attack was considered to be slight (and this was stated in the Scheme) the military's re-designation of the Mobile Force seemed to be no more than an effort to appease the politicians.

Ian Mackenzie received the revised Scheme from the Chief of the General Staff in March, 1937, and commented:

I have carefully read the revised draft of Defence Scheme No. 3. I am glad to observe

(1) Harris, "Or There Would Be Chaos", p. 122.

(2) Stacey. Six Years of War, p. 30

(3) Ibid. p. 31.

that the dominant motif of the plan is the Defence of Canada and Internal Security; but I realize that whereas Government policy is at the moment concerned with the defence of Canada and the protection of Canadian neutrality, it is the duty of the staff to prepare for every possible contingency. I therefore approve the plan in principle and detail. (emphasis is mine).(1)

In other words, Mackenzie sanctioned the military's contention that plans for an expeditionary force should continue to exist (thus his approval of the 'principle of the Scheme) and applauded the Scheme's increased, but rather meaningless, emphasis on home defence (hence his approval of the plan's details).

Mackenzie also defined the role the General Staff was to play in defence planning before the war by telling the Chief of the General Staff that his responsibility entailed preparing for 'every possible contingency', even if such plans went against the grain of the Government's policy. The military at last had a role in defence planning, and better still, the role had ministerial approval, even if it lacked King's sanction. Defence Scheme No. 3 was only a mobilization plan combined with a plan for home defence. "It could not be a general war plan of operations without discussion and coordination with Canada's

(1) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2648, HQS3498, Minute by Ian Mackenzie to Defence Scheme No. 3, March 17, 1937.

potential allies." (1) There was no way, even if the Scheme existed as policy by default, that an expeditionary force could have been sent to Europe if Canadians had opposed the idea. But Ian Mackenzie's support of Defence Scheme No. 3 ensured that the military could meet the forthcoming crisis with a comprehensive plan geared specifically towards addressing the likeliest contingency.

Of course, Defence Scheme No. 3 was merely a paper scheme and the military lacked the resources to give it substance through acquisitions of modern equipment. The military hoped to achieve this by gaining such acquisitions under the guise of home defence. In General Pope's memoirs, he recalls that:

[a] start had been made on improving our West Coast defence, to gain approval for which we were forced back to the inane thesis that in the event of a war between the United States and Japan, it would be incumbent on Canada to defend her neutrality! To my mind, and, I am sure, to that of the entire General Staff, this idea.... that it might some day become incumbent on Canada to defend her neutrality was the height of absurdity. (2)

The battle of the defence estimates would not be resolved in the

(1) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments. p. 108. The plan was known to the British Staff. Both in conversations between McNaughton and Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, in 1934 (PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 103) and in Liaison Letters, the British were told that if the Canadian Government approved, they could expect the despatch of an expeditionary force from Canada. PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 30, (Canadian Liaison Letters, December 31, 1932 and April 16, 1936).

(2) Pope, p. 91. The priority on West Coast defence over the Atlantic was sustained until 1939, even though military imperatives reversed the priority.

General Staff's favour. Defence estimates were increased in 1937 and they continued to rise until the outbreak of war(1) but they were not commensurate with the equipment which was required. As General Ashton had written to Mackenzie in 1937:

While the Militia Service vote for 1937-38 has been raised to \$18,690,928 it must be borne in mind that after provision was made for administration, and the upkeep of the Permanent and Non-Permanent Forces, it was possible to devote to New Services only a sum of \$4,834,931, of which \$895,000 was allotted to Fortifications and \$3,939,931 to New Equipment and Ammunition.(2)

These funds had been insufficient. General Ashton appears to have reversed his tactic of making requests for equipment under the guise of home defence late in 1938.

I do not know whether you have placed our Defence Scheme before the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, or whether it has in any way been considered by other members of the Government beside yourself, but it would appear to me that the basis of the Scheme should be known to the Government and approved by them.(3)

In fact, shortly before this letter, Mackenzie had sent his 'Chief' a copy of the revised Defence Scheme No. 3, noting that "the last paragraph deals with a Mobile Force to be used outside Canada. No one else outside C.G.S. has seen this memo."(4)

(1) Stacey. Six Years of War. pp. 7-15.

(2) PAC, Mackenzie Papers, Vol. 128, X-4, Ashton to Mackenzie. "The Requirements of National Defence: A Statement on Militia Armament and Supply. 23 September, 1937.

(3) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2648, CGS to the Minister. 28 September, 1938.

(4) PAC, W.L.M.K. Papers, Vol. 227, Mackenzie to King. 9/9/38.

King's response to this information was to simply acknowledge that he "received tonight and read carefully the memo from the Defence Department prepared, at my request, re: steps to be taken in the event of war." (1) Clearly, King did not realize the extent to which the General Staff had directed its plans towards the expeditionary force. If he had, he would not have been quite so complacent; overt plans would jeopardize national unity.

King truly hoped that the despatch of an expeditionary force would be unnecessary, for in the House of Commons, King said, "the days of Great Expeditionary Forces of infantry crossing the oceans are not likely to recur." (2) Indeed, there was some opinion in British military quarters that an expeditionary force would not leave Great Britain "while intensive air action is going on. It would hardly be a practical military project to begin with, and secondly, no politician would allow it to start." (3) But when British opinion began to shift in this regard, Mackenzie King's position became difficult. He knew that if Britain were involved in a major war, Canada would

(1) PAC, King's Diary, 10 September 1938.

(2) PAC, W.L.M.K. Papers, Vol. 157, Revised Hansard, March 30, 1939, page 2426.

(3) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 109, Otter Committee File, General Ironside to Chief of Staff J.H. MacBrien, 27 January 1923. The General Staff did not agree with this assumption. As McNaughton wrote, "I take issue with General Ironsides [sic] when he argues that the advent of the Air implies necessarily a considerable delay in the despatch of an expeditionary force." McNaughton to MacBrien: Re: Ironside's Letter, 13 March 1923. Ibid.

participate. On 20 March 1939, King stated in the House of Commons that "[i]f there were a prospect of an aggressor launching an attack on Britain, with bombers raining death on London, I have no doubt what the decision of the Canadian people and Parliament would be." (1)

In a memorandum by O.D. Skelton of March 1939, the shift in the British trend against sending an expeditionary force to the Continent was discussed. The idea that an expeditionary force might be required posed serious political problems.

Obviously this development has repercussions on the Canadian situation. It will increase the pressure for developing a Canadian expeditionary force; it will make it more difficult to persuade the people who examine our militia defences carefully that our defence measures are really designed for the defence of Canada; it will make it more difficult to contend that if we did take part in an overseas war, any overseas participation by Canadians would be confined to a few thousand airmen; it will make it more difficult to give an assurance against conscription.

In saying that it will be more difficult to take any of the above positions it is not implied that they cannot be taken and adequately defended... (2)

All things were possible provided the Government remained in absolute control of its foreign and defence policies - and King solved the conscription problem by promising his Government would not resort to it in war. All things were possible provided King

(1) Debates, Canadian House of Commons, Vol. 11, 20 March 1939, p. 2043.

(2) Documents on Canadian External Relations Vol. 6, Memorandum, O.D. Skelton to Prime Minister, March 10, 1939, No. 929.

maintained the illusion that Parliament would decide the extent of Canada's participation in the next war. But the civil imperatives were too important to ignore, even at the risk of entering the war without adequate preparations. The military, by standing solidly behind Defence Scheme No. 3 had, according to King, run an even greater risk than unpreparedness. If its plans had become public knowledge, it would have been difficult indeed for the government to assert that its defence measures had been 'really' designed for home defence only. The General Staff's Defence Scheme No. 3 posed a potential threat to national unity, and when King realized what the generals had been planning, he was not amused.

Time ran out on the military. Long before Canada was in any position to provide immediate and effective support to a war effort, Hitler invaded Poland. On September 3, 1939, Britain declared war on Germany, honouring the Guarantee she had offered to Poland in March of the same year. The time had come for the Canadian Parliament to decide the extent of Canada's participation in the war. In preparation for this event, the Chiefs of Staff Committee sent the Government its recommendations for the employment of Canada's armed forces. The Committee noted the problems with the 1914 mobilization, and indicated that the General Staff had a comprehensive plan for the efficient mobilization of the Canadian Field Force. Moreover, the Force had been based on the existing Militia Organization and, since 1936, ensured sufficient manpower, evenly distributed over the

country to provide for a "purely voluntary force consisting only of officers and soldiers volunteering to serve for the duration of the war." (1)

The Committee recommended:

the immediate raising of an Army Corps of two divisions and ancillary troops (roughly 60,000 men) in accordance with the Militia Service Plan, and its despatch abroad as soon as arrangements can be made, in co-operation with the British Government, to transport it and to make good such deficiencies as cannot be supplied from Canadian sources. (2)

These suggestions, made on the basis of the General Staff's appreciation of the military imperatives of the war, were not welcomed by the government. The civil imperative of national unity carried more weight with King than the General Staff's advice.

Discarding the full extent of military advice, the government based its recommendations to Parliament on the advice of the Department of External Affairs. In a memorandum of 24 August 1939, O.D. Skelton wrote that the "defence of Canada should be put in the foreground...:If any military action is to be taken overseas, it should, in the first instance, be in the air service rather than by military contingents." (3) Mackenzie King

(1) Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 6, No. 1023, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Committee. "Canada's National Effort (Armed Forces) in the Early Stages of a Major War", 29 August 1939.

(2) Ibid.

(3) PAC, W.L.M.K. Papers, Vol. 228, O.D. Skelton to King. "Canadian War Policy." 24 August 1939.

agreed wholeheartedly with this policy. It neatly avoided the conscription issue since it gave priority to the airforce and it gave a solid appearance that Canada had determined the extent of her participation in the war independently from Britain.

The response of King and the Department of External Affairs to the General Staff's attempts to influence policy reveals the prevalent attitude among the civil authorities as to the role the military should play in defence policy. Loring Christie, a senior official at the Department of External Affairs sent Skelton a memorandum about the Chiefs of Staff' August 29th communication, in which he wrote:

The paper may perhaps give some notion of why certain things have been left undone in the past years at the Woods Building. They were spending most of their brains on this baby [Defence Scheme No. 3]... It has been most painstakingly worked out...the product of years of careful thought and effort... The need for home defence is now thrown overboard...something of a hairpin curve from the line of propaganda of recent years about attacks on Canada.(1)

After a meeting of the Cabinet Defence Committee on 5 September 1939, King commented with some bitterness:

It is clear that the Defence Department has been spending most of its time preparing for an expeditionary force, and that Mackenzie has either been conniving at this or not resisting it as he should, or knowing nothing about it.(2)

Mackenzie knew full well what the military would recommend to the

(1) Stacey. Arms, Men and Governments, p. 71.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 5 September 1939.

Government. The military had simply allowed the Government the opportunity to mobilize its army efficiently, without the chaos of 1914. King did not really appreciate the General Staff's helping hand, and he does not seem to have considered the political damage a chaotic mobilization might have incurred.

Of course, Mackenzie King had the final word. It was important not to "let the impression get abroad that there is to be any expeditionary force which indeed it is not the intention of the Government to have, if possible to resist." (1) First, King directed his Finance Minister "not to permit expenditures excepting for purposes of troops for the defence of Canada." (2) King then banished Mackenzie from the Department of National Defence to a lesser portfolio, in part because he believed Mackenzie had been unable to control the Chiefs of Staff. At the Emergency Council meeting on September 5, King observed that "it was really pathetic to see how helpless Mackenzie seemed in presenting any matters himself... He... is much more, as one of my colleagues said, the messenger of the heads of staff than their Chief." (3) Finally, King accepted Skelton's memorandum as the Government's official war policy. Only one division of the

(1) Ibid. 30 August 1939.

(2) Ibid. 4 September 1939.

(3) Ibid. 15 September 1939.

politicians for policy and resource allocation, the generals for detail and the fighting of battles. The government had the final word in all aspects of the war, but the specific delineation of responsibilities allowed the military to "adhere to a professional military outlook." (1) The British tried to conduct their war from the balanced perspectives of political and military points of view.

Britain's civil-military relations, in other words, were shaped by the imperative of national security and they were situated within the parliamentary system of government. The principle of government control worked because of a commitment to co-operation between the civil and military establishments. This co-operation was possible because of a clear demarcation between the two spheres. As a set of principles, these augured well for an effective conduct of war. The system was flexible enough to support modifications (for example, the structure of the War Committee and Churchill's amalgamation of the offices of Prime Minister and Defence Minister) (2) without placing these principles in jeopardy. The point of the whole institution was to permit the most effective means of protecting the nation from its enemies.

The American experience, like the British, involved a direct

(1) S.P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959) p. 328.

(2) Hankey, pp. 61-69.

the greater power exercised by King and his Government. The First Division, armed mainly with relics of the First World War, was wholly incapable of participating in the new war's theatres of operations for many years - until, in fact, King decided that Canada should fully embrace the notion of a 'nation in arms'. This was the power of the Government over the military between 1935 and 1939. The question remains, however: did King permit the military more influence once the Canadian war effort reached this higher dimension?

A Very Political War.

Theoretically, war increases the power of the military establishment in the balance of civil-military relations,⁽¹⁾ and so it did in several democratic nations, either in the preparations for war or upon the opening of hostilities. In Canada, the military leaders of the country, even after the declaration of war, found great difficulty in placing their requirements ahead of the political considerations in Mackenzie King's Liberal Cabinet. The reasons for this are to be found in the pre-war level of military institutions in Canada, in the circumstances of Canada's war, and in the character of the men who made policy decisions.

On 3 September, 1939, shortly after British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announced his country's declaration of war on Germany, the first air raid sirens of the war pierced London's air. Winston Churchill, soon to become Prime Minister, armed himself with a bottle of brandy and, with his wife, walked from his home to an air raid shelter. He found his neighbours jocular and cheerful, "as is the English manner when about to encounter the unknown."⁽²⁾ The barrage balloons were already in place,

(1) S.B. Finer, The Man on Horseback: The Role of the Military in Politics (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962) p. 72 and Bengt Abrahamson, Military Professionalization and Political Power (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972) p. 37.

(2) Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War The Gathering Storm, (New York: Bantam Books, 1961) p. 364.

compulsory military training had been accepted with little opposition, and a Field Force of 32 divisions and a Territorial Army of 26 divisions had been mobilized. Britons believed that national survival depended on an unqualified commitment to the destruction of German aggression.(1) Their war was a case of "once again? So be it!"(2)

Britain's stakes in the war were high, and the civil and the military arms of government went straight to the business of achieving national security. The conduct of civil-military relations was rooted in the principle of government control. In Britain's parliamentary system of government, the technical business of justifying and implementing policies, indeed of organizing resources for war, involves a responsibility and depth of knowledge which is beyond the military's realm. During the Second World War, control "remained in the hands of the statesmen, working in the closest co-operation with the Service Chiefs."(3) This co-operation was essential to Britain because the military was indispensable to the nation's survival.(4) Both spheres of government had their responsibilities the

(1) Michael Howard, The Continental Commitment: The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the Era of the Two Wars. The Ford Lectures in the University of Oxford, (London: Temple Smith, 1971) p. 128.

(2) Churchill, p. 365.

(3) Rt. Hon. M. Lord Hankey, The Lees Knowles Lecture, 1945, Government Control in War (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1945) pp. 12 and 78.

(4) Finer, p. 75.

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(1) S.P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State, (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959) p. 328.

(2) Hankey, pp. 61-69.

response to an act of aggression. The war had been slow in coming to the United States but after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, the Americans became committed "wholeheartedly" to the "national aim of total victory". The government threw its weight behind the military, making them the "executors of the national will."⁽¹⁾ Whatever resources were required to achieve victory were at the military's disposal.

The basis for the military's power came from the momentum behind the United State's entry into the war. Samuel Huntington noted a "civilian abdication" of control over policy and strategy.⁽²⁾ The swing of the pendulum over to the military's side could be accommodated in the American's executive system of government. Military power was not prescribed by formal legal positions, except that the generals had the legal right of direct access to the President. A mesh of personalities and a consensus over the single objective of victory facilitated the good relationship between Roosevelt and his generals. American civil-military relations lacked the clear demarcation between the spheres which was entrenched in Britain, because the military, with the approval of the politicians, assumed political roles. Involvement on the political level involved a double sacrifice; the politicians of their right to control, the military of their

(1) Huntington, p. 317.

(2) Ibid. p. 317.

professionalism.(1)

There were differences between the conduct of civil-military relations in Britain and the United States. Military power was restrained by the principle of government control in Britain, while this power was seemingly untethered by the Americans in their civilian abdication of the right to control. Nevertheless, both countries accorded the military a good deal of influence

(1) Huntington, Chapter 12. Military involvement in politics is a contentious issue among civil-military relations theorists. The point to the theories discussed by Huntington, Finer and Abrahamson is to maximize national security while sustaining safeguards to military power through civilian control. Huntington argues that military professionalism, achieved through "objective civilian control" (minimizing the military's political power) enhances the military security of the state with a minimal sacrifice of social values. A true military mind will not embrace politics. Professionalism, therefore, is the only safeguard to an abuse of military power. (Huntington, Chapters 4 and 12)

Finer and Abrahamson, striving for the same objectives, see the military as a political phenomenon. Both note that professionalism is very likely to encourage intervention in politics. Finer notes that a truly professional military will naturally intervene in politics, given the opportunity and the disposition to do so, and that the only control is the military's subscription to the principle of civilian supremacy. (Finer, pp. 25-30) Abrahamson places an even stronger emphasis of the military's enormous power potential and states that "civilian control hinges on an explicit recognition of the military's professional bias, and on the adequate capacity to respond to that bias." (Abrahamson, p. 161)

In a war, however, the point is to make the most effective use of military expertise without exceeding national resources or expectations. Huntington argues, and perhaps rightly so, that the American military's lack of professionalism focused their attention on victory rather than national security, and victory is a political issue which could undermine security. (Huntington, p. 315) The point is also made that the American's war was run in precisely the way the Americans wanted (Huntington, p. 315). This point reinforces the significance of the momentum behind a declaration of war on a system of civil-military relations.

over policy, in spite of the differences between executive and parliamentary systems of government. The reasons for this influence appear to have come from the massive public support for the war in both countries, and from the threats to each nation's security and survival. As well, British and American leaders were sympathetic to the military(1) and as the war progressed, they became the executors of grand strategy. Systems of government, then, only affected the way in which the generals could exercise their increased influence. The circumstances of war, the nation's degree of involvement and the public's support for the cause proved highly persuasive in determining the impact of the war on civil-military relations. The Canadian experience is just the case to demonstrate this point.

In democracies, the degree of influence which the military can exercise over policy is a political decision. In Canada, the government assessed the threats posed by the war, and judging from its reluctance to give the military much influence, it apparently believed that the political problems which participation had created were more significant in terms of the nation's security, than the military exigencies of the war

(1) Winston Churchill had experience as a combatant, war correspondent and military historian. He was First Lord of the Admiralty in both wars, Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War and Air, member of the War Council and Dardanelles Committee in the First World War and of the War Cabinet in the Second World War. Hankey, p. 63. Roosevelt "viewed himself as a master strategist and relished the title of Commander in Chief. He liked to consort with the military leaders, and he liked to think he could consort with them on equal terms." Huntington, p. 319.

itself. As in Britain, government control was a prominent feature of Canadian civil-military relations, but unlike the British case, government control limited the military's professionalism. During the war, Mackenzie King's priority was to avoid political crises which could fracture the country. As before the war, the military had the potential to be a politically divisive force and thus its influence was circumscribed by the weight of political imperatives.

Political imperatives owed their weight to the circumstances of Canada's war. First of all, Canada went to war for Britain.⁽¹⁾ The Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans insulated Canada from the worst of the fighting, making it difficult (but not impossible) for the political leaders to justify participation on the grounds of national security. As such, participation was a particularly provocative political decision.⁽²⁾ Many Canadians had spent the interregnum between the wars on a course of national soul-searching, in an effort to come to grips with myriad nationalisms. Some, like Frank Underhill, believed that entry into another war:

except one which is forced upon us by actual invasion of our territory, will destroy overnight all unity as we have hitherto achieved. Relations between French and

(1) The "impetus for decision sprang from the same sentiment and sense of shared interests across the Atlantic" that had brought her into the First World War. D.M.L. Farr, "The View of History in the Making of Canada's External Policies", Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, 1978, p. 7.

(2) See Chapter One.

English in our country are still embittered by the memories of the last war; and in another war there will be no unanimity even among English-speaking Canadians. Another war...will substitute an atmosphere of hate and hysteria for one of reasonableness and goodwill. By the imposition of an artificial unity enforced through the machinery of a totalitarian state, it will destroy any genuine unity based on conciliation and consent.(1)

Other Canadians accepted participation, provided it would enhance the nation's domestic development and international prestige, without sacrificing national interests. In this war, it was "Canada at Britain's side", remember, not holding up her aging parent's hands, still less boldly striding in front of him.(2) Anglophiles, perhaps the happiest group, believed Canada should make a total commitment to the war and were dismayed by King's caution.(3)

French Canadians had other concerns which participation for Britain's sake had aroused. To them, Canada's declaration of war

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- (1) Frank Underhill, In Search of Canadian Liberalism (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd. 1961) p. 190. Frank Underhill was an academic, a co-founder of the League for Social Reconstruction and active in the CCF party.
- (2) A.R.M. Lower, My First Seventy-Five Years (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967) p. 239. Lower, another academic, was very involved in the Canadian Institute of International Affairs and during the war, participated in civil liberties organizations.
- (3) W. R. Young, "Mobilizing English Canada For War: The Bureau of Public Information, the Wartime Information Board and a view of the Nation During the Second World War", in Sidney Aster, Ed., The Second World War as a National Experience (Ottawa: The Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1981) p. 199.

was a compromise of Canadian autonomy which only a promise of no conscription had made forgivable. Quebec's autonomy could be sacrificed as the wartime federal government became centralized. Participation threatened the survival of the French language, since English was the language of Canada's war. Urban migration and the entry of more and more women into the work force spelled to many the end of the traditional order in Quebec society.(1)

These concerns, all born out of Canada's casus belli, were threads of Canada's political fabric, and weaving them into a single cloth was Mackenzie King's political problem. King's skill as a politician was illustrated in Canadians' general acceptance of the decision for war. There were only a few dissenting voices when Parliament voted to declare war.(2) If participation was inevitable(3) or merely tolerable, there was very little enthusiasm for the war. O.D. Skelton (Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs) approached the truth when he noted that "a majority of Canadians would not have

(1) Richard Jones, "Politics and Culture: The French Canadians and the Second World War", in Ibid., pp. 84-86.

(2) Bruce Hutchison, The 'Incredible Canadian: A Candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: his works, his times, and his nation'. (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Company, 1952) pp. 255-257.

(3) See Norman Hillmer, "Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military 'Alliance' in the 1930's", International Journal, XXXIII, 3, (September 1978) pp. 588-612.

voted for war in a free plebiscite." (1) Painting the Canadian response to the war with a broad brush, J.L. Granatstein noted that Canadians had little desire to fight Stalin or Hitler. (2) There was opposition, but its forces were difficult to marshal. There were no effective leaders and the opposition which existed was half-hearted. (3)

Having set Canada's course, King next had to keep the nation on an even keel. Once again, this was a matter for the politicians. At the very least, King had to build a "national wartime consensus of opinion in English Canada." (4) Through the vehicle of the Bureau of Public Information and later, the Wartime Information Board, the government kept tabs on the state of public opinion. The war was presented as a fight against aggression. Material and military contributions were played up

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- (1) Norman Hillmer, "The Anglo-Canadian Neurosis: The Case of O.D. Skelton", in P. Lyon, ed. Britain and Canada: Survey of a Changing Relationship (London: Frank Cass, 1976) p. 78. Skelton's opposition to Canadian participation was not based on a denial of the importance of Britain's security to Canada. It was more a reaction against the sham the war had made of Canadian autonomy and British incompetence in negotiating the crisis. Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 6, ed. John A. Munro, (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1972) No. 1005, Skelton to King, "Canada and the Polish War", 25 August 1939.
- (2) J.L. Granatstein, Canada's War: The Politics of the Mackenzie King Government, 1939-1945, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) pp. 1-41.
- (3) W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) p. 24. and Granatstein, p. 20.
- (4) Young, p. 196.

and efforts were made to create a unifying sense of Canadianism.(1) Canada's war effort itself, and not merely her decision to participate, had to be politically acceptable.

Mackenzie King's speech to Canadians on 3 September 1939, aptly called "At Britain's Side", was one of many attempts to sell the war to the country. King stressed that the nation's first priority was home defence. Beyond that, Parliament would decide the extent of further co-operation (preferably along the lines of supply and air training) with Britain. In any event, the war effort would be voluntary.(2) This was well in keeping with King's tried and true formula for national unity. In the House of Commons, on 8 September, King reminded Canadians that Britain's defeat would pose a grave danger to Canada. "Unless a definite stand is taken now by those who prize their freedom, they may expect that aggression will not cease, but will continue to the limit."(3) In short, the cause was worthy and the government would do its best to keep everyone happy. King pledged that there would be no opportunity for war profiteers in Canada. Nor would there be any patronage appointments by the government.(4) The degree of self interest in Canada's war

(1) Ibid. p. 196.

(2) Rt. Hon. W.L.M. King, M.P., "At Britain's Side", Broadcast 3 September 1939, Canada at Britain's Side, (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1941) p. 4.

(3) Debates, Canadian House of Commons, 5th (Special War) Session, Vol. 1, p. 26.

(4) Ibid. pp. 22-36.

priorities was partly due to the combined effects of the nation's isolation and relative security from Europe, and of its emotional detachment from the war. "Canada was at war out of a sense of duty, not because her own national interests were directly threatened. This being so, why shouldn't the war produce some benefits for Canadians?"(1)

Making the benefits of the war apparent to Canadians was a full time job which would have taxed the talents of the most masterful leader. As it was, Canada had Mackenzie King. "With his tubby little figure, his bald head covered by a few wisps of hair, and his precise formality, he was the furthest thing imaginable from a national wartime leader."(2) There were many Canadians who were less than impressed with King's leadership capabilities in wartime, and a press campaign headed by the Sifton papers in the West stated it "would be better to have some more warlike person take the leadership."(3) King was not very good at "breeding confidence. He just wasn't a very impressive figure."(4) As an orator, King was not very inspired. According to Richard Malone, any effort "to make King sound warlike and heroic was an exercise in futility. His appearance, delivery and

(1) Granatstein, p. 42.

(2) Richard S. Malone, A Portrait of War, 1939-1943, (Toronto: Collins Publishers, 1983) p. 74.

(3) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, MG26, J13, 30 May 1949.

(4) Interview, Major-General Christopher Vokes, CB, CBE, DSO, Oakville, Ontario, 10 November, 1984.

public image were all against it."(1) "What lift the country got, it got mainly from outside, from the broadcast voices of Churchill and Roosevelt. Canada had no equivalent."(2) The element of dynamic leadership might have rallied Canadians around the cause of war, making public opinion a significant source of support instead of a force to be appeased.

The challenges to King's war policies were persistent reminders that national consensus was tenuous. Almost immediately after the declaration, Quebec held an election in which participation was tried by a jury of thousands. It was an important event for the Prime Minister, for the defection of French Canada would have "meant his political ruin."(3) The contest focussed on which of Quebec's two parties "represented the best defence against conscription."(4) Bolstered by the federal Liberals, their provincial counterparts under Adelard Godbout won, and the King government's unenviable responsibility to keep the pledge of no conscription became all the more significant. At stake in this promise were not only the political fortunes of the Liberal party (and the banishment of the Tories from Quebec after 1917 was proof of the need for

(1) Malone, p. 74.

(2) C.P. Stacey, "Canadian Leaders of the Second World War", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. LXVI, No. 1, March, 1985, p. 74.

(3) C.P. Stacey, "The Second World War as a National Experience: Canada", in Sidney Aster, p. 18.

(4) Richard Jones, p. 82.

caution) but also the unity of the country. When the government moved closer and closer to breaking its promise to Quebec later in the war, Andre Laurendeau would write that [the]:

Time was coming when Canadians would realize that they no longer understood one another, that they despised and hated each other, that they formed two nations that had suddenly become mutually intolerable.(1)

The language of conscription was harsh when it was translated into French. King had continually to be on his guard.

English Canadians had many reasons to criticize King's war policies, particularly those who saw the war as a means of enhancing the nation's status. In fairness to King, Canada had been left to play a hand that had been dealt by the greater powers in the alliance against Germany. Canada played no part in the strategic direction of the war. From his vantage point in Washington, General Pope would say in 1943 that the "general direction of the war has been entrusted to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, that is to say to the Joint United States Chiefs of Staff and to the Representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff. This responsibility the Combined Chiefs of Staff had never shown much desire to share with the military representatives of the Lesser United Nations."(2) C.P. Stacey makes the significant point that

(1) Andre Laurendeau, Witness for Quebec, Essays selected and translated by Philip Stratford, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1973) p. 52.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) M.A. Pope Papers, MG27III, F4, Vol. 1 (Diary) "Washington Report, 31 March 1943".

in a war by committee, there could only be a few chiefs. (1) If the Dominions had been involved in strategy, "decisions would have been made more difficult." (2) The King Government accepted its exclusion from the grand strategy coalitions of Great Britain, France, and later, the United States, because it was a situation which required acceptance. (3)

However inevitable, the situation bred discontent among many Canadians. The constitutional developments of the inter-war years had given Canada legislative parity with Great Britain, but the war had swiftly demonstrated that legal documents had very little to do with military power. (4) War, called by General

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- (1) C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments: Canada's War Policies, 1939-1945, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1972) pp. 137-140.
- (2) PAC, M.A. Pope Papers, "Washington Report, 31 March 1943".
- (3) Canada was not permitted to set up her own staff missions in Washington or London until 1942 and 1944 respectively. Even with the Missions, it was difficult for Canada to get military information from the Americans and the British. The 'Big Two' preferred to keep control of the war in their own hands. Australia pushed harder than Canada for better representation, but although she gained the right to attend some Cabinet and Defence Committee meetings, the information gleaned was very general. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, Part IV and M.A. Pope, Soldiers and Politicians: The Memoirs of Lt.-Gen. M.A. Pope, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962) Chapter X.
- (4) Stacey, "Canadian Leaders in the Second World War", pp. 64-65.

McNaughton "the acid test of sovereignty", (1) confronted Canadian generals and politicians with the irreconcilable fact that Canada still ranked second to Britain. On one level, this was accepted by King. Indeed, he did not want Canada to play a larger role in the war. As O.D. Skelton said, "if you wish to call the tune, you have to pay the piper." (2) The piper's price was high - at least it was higher than King believed Canadians would willingly pay. (3) On the basis of his concern for national unity, what King could not accept were criticisms of Canada's subordinate role. "We must", government officials were told, "demand a voice, and a decisive voice, in the general conduct of the war... we simply cannot allow control to remain solely in British hands." (4) King's solution to the damned if he did or did not conundrum was to seek recognition for Canada's contribution to the war, and rightly so. "[S]omething was due to our own national pride and status, and to assert those things...without injuring the military interests of the alliance" (5) became a real challenge for Mackenzie King.

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- (1) C.P. Stacey, A Date With History: Memoirs of a Canadian Historian, (Ottawa: Deneau Publishers, 1982) pp. 75-76.
- (2) L.B. Pearson, Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, PC, CC, OM, OBE, MA, LL.D. Vol. 1, 1897 - 1948. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) p. 171.
- (3) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 143. See also Chapter One.
- (4) Lower, p. 239, quoting a memorandum he despatched to official circles in 1940.
- (5) Stacey, "Canadian Leaders in the Second World War", p. 65..

Canada's relationship with Great Britain did not offer much of the prestige King sought and in the early years of the war, he declined opportunities to be involved in Imperial conferences and councils. When Prime Minister Menzies of Australia came to Canada to plead his case for an Imperial Council, King explained his position. There was no point to setting up a central Empire organization because "while the occasion lasted [the British] would appear not to differ with your views but the moment you had gone the whole situation would slip back into the position it was before and, in the meantime, you would have incurred the responsibility without power."⁽¹⁾ Such a situation would create more problems than it would solve, not the least of which was the demonstration of Britain's seniority over Canada to Canadians. Given Canada's sensitivity to colonial status, this was hardly a point to emphasize.

There was an avenue which might have led to national prestige, and that was Canada's self-imposed role as the bridge between the United States and Great Britain. Before the United States entered the war, Canada's concern with stable Anglo-American relations was less a question of prestige than a concern for security. In part, this had been a traditional facet of Canadian diplomacy. Recognizing that Canada had ties to two great powers, successive governments had been anxious to avoid "taking a position in which she would have to choose between the

(1) PAC, King Diary, 7 May 1941.

larger countries."(1) During the war, Canada had other interests to preserve as well. Before December 1941, and particularly after the Fall of France, King was anxious to cultivate American support for Britain because he knew the United States was essential to Britain's survival. "If the United States does not help Britain, we will have to pray pretty hard for the Lord to hear the prayer that will save the rest of the English-speaking world."(2)

Here was a concrete role for Canada to play. After Germany's Spring offensive in 1940, King was asked to despatch four Canadian destroyers to Britain. King decided to communicate Britain's grave position to the United States in hopes of spurring the weight of American muscle against Germany. In a series of secret conversations, King interpreted Roosevelt's position to Churchill, noting that there would be no immediate belligerent aid but intimating that in 'God's good time' help would be given.(3) There was obviously some value in Canada's

(1) D.M.L. Farr, p. 9.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 28 June 1940.

(3) J.W. Pickersgill, The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 1, 1939-1944, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) p. 121. As Stacey notes, this situation put King under considerable strain. In the event of Britain's defeat, the Americans wanted to break up the British fleet and sink those ships which could not be despatched to South Africa, Singapore, Australia, the Caribbean and Canada. Roosevelt was most anxious that the Americans not be identified as the author of this idea. King ignored Roosevelt's request and told Churchill all the details, but the covert nature of the discussions put King into an uncomfortable position. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 328-332.

position as interpreter but beyond this function, there was little else the country could do.

Still, Canada's role as linch-pin had merit. Great Britain was the counter-weight to American power in Canada. American military strength posed a real "political danger to Canada." Their forces are so much more powerful than our own," King wrote, "just what may result...is difficult to say...I would keep the British Commonwealth of Nations as intact as possible...It is better to have two peoples and two governments on this continent understanding each other and reciprocating in their relations...than to have anything like continental union." (1) Clearly, it was to Canada's advantage to lodge herself firmly between the two powers.

As the Americans' involvement in the war became more concrete, however, there was less and less Canada could do to offset the combined power of Great Britain and the United States. Canada's bridge existed to be "walked upon and over". (2) While King was busy pointing out the benefits of his role as guardian of Anglo-American relations, (3) and using it as an excuse to

(1) Pickersgill, p. 203.

(2) Farr, p. 9.

(3) See PAC, King Diary, 30 April 1940, 7 May 1941. Public Archives of Canada (PAC) J.L. Ralston Papers, MG2714, B11, Vol. 41, File "Churchill, Brooke, Sinclair, Notes by J.L. Ralston 1940-1941," Conversation, Ralston and Churchill, 7 January 1941. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, MG26, J4, Vol. 427, "Rogers' Diary, Visit to United Kingdom", 8 May 1940.

avoid visits to the United Kingdom(1) Great Britain and the United States were conducting their own negotiations, the fruits of which indicated that the two nations would work together without Canada. All the substance of Canada's efforts to be the established intermediary between the two disappeared, leaving only the residue of the status which might have incited national pride.

In April 1941 the Canadian Chiefs of Staff pointed out:

The increasingly difficult position which Canada is tending to occupy as a result of the bilateral conversations, political and military, that have been, and are being conducted between London and Washington.

As a direct outcome of the London-Washington conversations Canada is finding herself faced with various defence arrangements [ABC-1] importantly affecting her own and contiguous territory concerning which she has not been consulted.(2)

In the event of the United States entering the war, the Americans would assume responsibility for strategic direction in the Pacific and Western Atlantic. Canada's own interests in the area did not - and would not - receive consideration.(3) The Canadian Government responded by requesting representation to strategic councils (sending the ubiquitous Pope to Washington as a representative of the War Committee and later as Chairman of the

(1) Ibid.

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 41, File "Chiefs of Staff Committee, General, Vol. 1, 15 April 1941.

(3) Ibid.

Canadian Joint Staff Mission)(1) but, surprisingly, it made only a moderate protest against the shabby treatment Canada had received.(2) King raised the subject with President Roosevelt when he was negotiating the Hyde Park agreement and was assured that the President would emphasize the importance of consultation with Canada to his military authorities.(3) It was quite obvious, given the United States' strident opposition to the establishment of a Canadian Mission in Washington, that if Roosevelt did raise the issue, it was ignored.

In August 1941, King received embarrassing evidence that his self-imposed role as linch-pin between Britain and the United States carried little weight. When Churchill and Roosevelt met on a United States cruiser off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada was not included in the negotiations. Nor was she informed of the meeting until just before it occurred. King told Malcolm MacDonald (the British High Commissioner) that he:

thought the public in Canada and certainly some of my colleagues and my own officials will think it extraordinary that Churchill should have brought his own staff to negotiate with the United States staff and ignore Canada altogether. While I had expected a personal visitation between Churchill and Roosevelt I had never thought of their bringing their representatives... for conferences on war plans, leaving Canada completely to one side - simply saying that we would be told what had been done though

(1) Pope, Soldiers and Politicians, pp. 181-185.

(2) Britain did not forward Canada's complaints to the Americans. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 161.

(3) Pickersgill, p. 202.

having no voice in the arrangements... [the matter] was on all fours with what has thus far been done between Britain and the United States since they have been brought together, not wishing even a mission from Canada to Washington...The only real position for Canada to take is that of a nation wholly on her own vis-a-vis both Britain and United States.(1)

King did not make "any difficulties about the matter", (2) presumably to avoid bringing the issue even more into the public eye.

In private, however, the Prime Minister's response to the exclusion was less guarded. The 'slight', coupled with the implications of the ABC-1 plan, showed that Canada was a lightweight in Anglo-American affairs. Both illustrated Canada's lesser status in the alliance against Germany. Similarly, both revealed that Canadian decisions were insignificant as far as winning the war was concerned. After playing up his role as linch-pin between the two powers, King was understandably concerned that the public would find such treatment extraordinary.

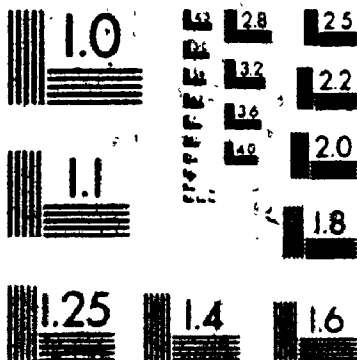
The Prime Minister worried that the "Tory press of Canada will now begin to say that neither Churchill nor the President have any confidence in myself, or feel it is necessary to take me into account." (3) The incident posed potential problems for

(1) PAC, King Diary, 7 August 1941.

(2) Ibid.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 7 August 1941.

2



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

King's political fortunes(1) but as King told Churchill in 1943, his problem was Canada's problem, "namely the need of having the Canadian people feel that we were really having a voice in all matters pertaining to the war." (2) National unity hung partly on Canada's status in the war:

there were two lines of pressure which were very great... One was the Opposition in Parliament which was continually drawing attention to Canada not being represented on this or that Committee... In other words whether I was letting Canada's position go by default so that when it came to the time for peace, we would have no real voice. The other pressure was that from my colleagues in the Cabinet and from members of the Permanent Staff, External Affairs, etc., who were always at me to be asserting more strongly Canada's position. (3)

Where King saw two lines of pressure, there was really only one. Canadians needed to believe in the significance of their nation's contribution to the war.

For the rest of the war, the Prime Minister's task of reassuring Canadians that their contribution was significant rested on the slender thread of a facade. During the Quebec Conference of 1943, King thought it essential "to maintain with care and due deference our position as a country in no way subordinate to Britain - in any aspect of its domestic or

(1) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 186.

(2) Pickersgill, p. 538.

(3) Ibid.

external affairs. A very difficult position for me." (1) He appointed General Pope to act as a contact between the Prime Minister's Office and the Combined Chiefs of Staff which, in Pope's view, was "a bit of window dressing... as we are not directing the war. [his emphasis] (2) Care was taken to ensure the Canadian flag flew "in equality with the Union Jack". (3) King arranged to be photographed sitting between Churchill and Roosevelt. And C.P. Stacey summarized the whole performance in his caption of this photograph, calling it "The Little Man Who Wasn't There". "The absence of the Canadian Chiefs of Staff from this publicity picture," he said, "would have revealed the nature of the conference to an informed observer." (4)

(1) PAC, King Diary, 4 August 1943.

(2) PAC, M.A. Pope Papers, Vol. 1 (Diary), 8 August 1943.

(3) Pickersgill, p. 543.

(4) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 149.

11

With so many sources of controversy, the war effort demanded a great deal of control by the politicians in order to mitigate divisiveness. As explained in Chapter One, Canada had inherited the principle of civil supremacy in military decisions. It is evident that this supremacy was influenced in Canada by the peculiar political and social circumstances of a young nation with a pluralistic population. Had Canada's survival been directly threatened, as was Britain's, the difference in both governments' approaches to control might have been less obvious. On paper, it appeared as though Canada had made provisions for a substantial degree of interaction between the civil and military authorities. The demands of the war created a political frame of reference for military decisions in which the military had to struggle to gain a measure of influence with Canadian politicians. Their success depended on the willingness and the ability of the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence to listen to and accept their advice, and on the ability

of the men in uniform to get the measure of the politicians.(1)

The first priority of the civil authorities was to establish an efficient means of expediting the increased business of government in the secrecy the war required and with an attention to domestic detail which the cause of unity demanded. Cabinet committees had been created in the late 1930s to assist with Canada's defence preparations. From these evolved the machinery for the direction of the war effort. The War Committee of the Cabinet was the most important of these. It dealt with all questions of general war policy.(2) Membership in the War Committee included the Prime Minister as Chairman, the leader of the Government in the Senate (Dandurand), and the Ministers of Justice (Lapointe), Finance (Ralston), National Defence (Rodgers),

(1) Pope, p. 139. See A.D.P. Heeney, "Cabinet Government in Canada: Some Recent Developments in the Machinery of the Central Executive", Journal of Economics and Political Science, August 1946, pp. 282-301. _____, Ed. B.D. Heeney, The things that are Caesar's: Memoirs of a Canadian Public Servant (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972) Chapters 5 and 6. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 111-136. _____, The Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Vol. 1, Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific Chapters VI-VII, James Eayrs, The Art of the Possible: Government and Foreign Policy in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) pp. 79-102.

(2) As of 5 December 1939 the War Committee replaced the Cabinet Defence Committee, established in August 1936, and the Emergency Council, formed on 30 August 1939. Its mandate was "to consider questions of general policy, to consider reports from special and other committees; and to co-ordinate war activities." Public Archives of Canada (PAC) Records of the Department of National Defence, RG24, Vol. 2759, File HQS6615. P.C. 4017 1/2, "Minute of a Meeting of the Committee of the Committee of the Privy Council, 5 December 1939.

and Mines and Resources (T.A. Crerar). In 1940, the Ministers of Munitions and Supply (C.D. Howe), National Defence for Air (Power), National War Services (Gardiner), and National Defence for Naval Services (Angus Macdonald) were added to the Committee. (1) The Committee reserved the right to call on any political or military officer for assistance or information. (2) This was an important provision since it was the only potential channel of communication between the War Committee and the generals.

In one way, the War Committee was similar to Britain's War Cabinet. The members in both countries retained their departmental obligations (unlike Lloyd George's War Cabinet) with the effect that attention was often distracted from the war effort. (3) In Britain though, the Prime Minister was also the Defence Minister (after 1940) and he worked closely with the Chiefs of Staff. (4) In Canada, there was only a minimum of interaction, in spite of the provision to bring in outside advisors. Until June 1942, the generals were rarely invited to attend meetings of the War Committee. Even then, they were only

(1) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 114.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee RG 2, 7C, Vol. 1, C4653A, 8 December 1939.

(3) Hankey, pp. 65-66, Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 116-117.

(4) Hankey, p. 62.

asked to attend two meetings each month.(1) The Chiefs became more important to the War Committee when the war came uncomfortably close to Canada (just after Pearl Harbour and during the Aleutian Campaign in May 1942).(2) Even then, their professional advice was not always heeded.

Why were the military excluded? If the war had increased their influence (as it had in Britain and the United States) then there should have been more involvement by the military in policy making than in the pre-war years. At the level of high policy, this was not so. Since Canada was not involved in the strategic direction of the war, there was no real need for continuous interaction between the politicians and the generals.(3) This is only a partial explanation, though. The Prime Minister's influence was also significant. King disliked the army and rarely felt the need for military advice, in spite of his lack of military knowledge. There were few military issues which did not raise political concerns (particularly conscription).(4) King's power as Prime Minister was substantial. He could control the

(1) Stacey notes that of 167 meetings held between 17 June 1942 and the Committee's dissolution, the military attended only 45. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 115. PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 41, File "Chiefs of Staff Committee, General, Vol. 1" Memorandum: the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 8 February 1943.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments p. 115.

(4) Eayrs, p. 75.

considerable debate ensued between King and Norman Rogers, as supporters of the Corps, and J.L. Ralston, who as Finance Minister, opposed the expense of ancillary units and felt "that the money to be spent on the latter would go infinitely further in the war effort if spent on air or naval services." (1) King agreed with Ralston, but for once, he put the army ahead of finances. (2) On 17 May the 1st Canadian Corps and the 3rd Division were authorized. (3)

At the time that these decisions were being made, there was considerable concern over Canada's munitions industries. King's Government had made supply a priority and on 3 September 1939 the Prime Minister requested information on Britain's requirements. (4) Britain asked for Canadian dollars, food, raw materials and aircraft. (5) Shortages of dollars, Canada's attempts to secure orders for manufactured and raw materials at a high price and Britain's lack of faith in Canada's industrial capacity frustrated fiscal negotiations. (6)

(1) Ibid. and PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 17 May 1940. Ancillary units would cost 90 millions versus 16 millions for another division.

(2) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 32.

(3) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 17 May 1940.

(4) Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 6, No. 1054, Prime Minister to Prime Minister, 3 September 1939.

(5) Ibid. No. 1072, Dominion Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 6 September 1939.

(6) Douglas and Greenhouse, pp. 38-39 and Granatstein, pp. 59-63.

better with present limitations in equipment. On the other hand, a longer period for fewer numbers when practicable would more adequately meet the demands of modern mechanized warfare. (1)

In the end, a compromise was struck. The longer training period would be adopted (as of December 1940) but at the "end of the first month's training in the four month period, selections would be made from trainees for the army, navy, airforce and war industries." (2) The CGS opposed this plan, arguing against combined training, and in January 1941, the training period was further revised, delaying selection until two month's army training had been completed. (3)

The debate over manpower had only begun to gain momentum but King was sufficiently worried over the effects of the training controversy on Cabinet solidarity to warn his ministers to maintain a united front in public. In November 1940 he spoke "of the danger of Ministers contradicting each other by undue emphasis on the needs of the army as contrasted with the needs of industry, and the necessity of having correct relationship of the two in mind." (4) By 1942, after the national plebiscite which

(1) Ibid. Vol. 3, C4653A, 23 October 1940.

(2) Ibid. Vol. 3, C4653A, 31 October 1940.

(3) Ibid. Vol. 4, C4653A, 27 January 1941. This was one of the few times where military advice was accepted.

(4) PAC, King Diary, 18 November 1940. King was criticizing a radio broadcast made by the Minister of National War Services for his emphasis on the need for increased numbers overseas, and said that such a position "lacked] political judgement".

Pressure from Cabinet and from the British government forced King to send the expeditionary force(1) and he gave in to the demand on the basis that a military contingency overseas was important to Canadians' approval of his war policies. As the Chief of the General Staff pointed out to the War Committee later in September, "[t]he Canadian public would not be satisfied by Canadian participation if it were confined to air activity, even on a greatly enlarged scale. The public, he felt, thought in terms of ground troops and it was important that the military programme should not be interrupted."(2) This was the beginning of a commitment to the army which caused a good deal of controversy in the War Committee.

The basis of the dispute focused on the balance between the allocation of human and material resources to the war. There was a complicated series of divisions on this issue. Mackenzie King "expressed the view that Canadian manpower should be directed primarily to war industry."(3) He believed the "war could be won through weapons and munitions and other equipment and that we could render our greatest service in that line."(4) Supply gave the Canadian war effort its momentum, and that "momentum could

(1) PAC, King Diary, 7 September 1939 and Granatstein, p. 24.

(2) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee (Emergency Council), Vol. 1, C4653A, 28 September 1939.

(3) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 2, C4653A, 4 December 1940.

(4) PAC, King Diary, 30 April 1941.

only be maintained on the basis of increased national income." (1) The trick for the government was to maintain and develop adequate personnel in Canada's war industries at the same time as keeping sufficient numbers available for recruitment into the forces. (2) In many ways, the situation was a vicious circle. "To raise a larger army would involve...proportionate increases in requirements of equipment. This in turn would involve increased requirements of manpower in industry." (3)

On the other hand, the expansion of the army was a necessary facet of the war effort, for military and political reasons. King spoke to his colleagues on the subject of forming the 1st Canadian Corps, noting that:

the Canadian public would wish to have a Corps, that the pride of the nation would demand that; also that we owed it to McNaughton and the men who were prepared to give their lives, to let them have, in the way of formation, what they most desired. (4)

Canadian forces should have a "full national experience. [King] stressed the necessity of maintaining the pride and the moral of the little force we have by making them [sic] a complete entity." (5) There were financial worries, though, and

(1) PAC, W.L.M. King Papers, Vol. 427, "Rogers' Diary", 19 April 1940.

(2) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 2, C4653A, 3 October 1940.

(3) Ibid.

(4) PAC, King Diary, 2 April 1940.

(5) Ibid. 3 April 1940.

considerable debate ensued between King and Norman Rogers, as supporters of the Corps, and J.L. Ralston, who as Finance Minister, opposed the expense of ancillary units and felt "that the money to be spent on the latter would go infinitely further in the war effort if spent on air or naval services." (1) King agreed with Ralston, but for once, he put the army ahead of finances. (2) On 17 May the 1st Canadian Corps and the 3rd Division were authorized. (3)

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(2) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 32.

(3) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 17 May 1940.

(4) Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 6, No. 1054, Prime Minister to Prime Minister, 3 September 1939.

(5) Ibid. No. 1072, Dominion Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 6 September 1939.

(6) Douglas and Greenhous, pp. 38-39 and Granatstein, pp. 59-63.

The first wartime mission to Britain was that led by T.A. Crerar (Minister of Mines and Resources), which in itself indicates the importance Canada placed on supply. Crerar was determined to sell wheat to Britain and to encourage orders for manufactured goods. Canada's price for wheat was higher than the world market and Britain was concerned that the difference in cost would raise the cost of living. Such an increase would "have a very serious effect, not only on the spirit of the workers of [Great Britain] but on the whole capacity of the country to exert its maximum war effort." (1) Britain did not buy Canadian wheat until May 1940. (2)

• In April 1940, Defence Minister Norman Rogers went to London, in part to encourage British orders for Canadian manufactured goods. The United Kingdom had been placing large orders for aircraft and munitions in the United States, ignoring the Canadian factories. Part of Canada's problem resulted from an agreement with Britain in October 1939. This stipulated that the United Kingdom would be "responsible for issue and maintenance of unit equipment and for maintenance of personal equipment until units are absorbed into Canadian higher formation, when the unit equipment will be taken over by the

(1) Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 7, ed. David R. Massey, (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974) No. 548, "Minutes of a Meeting Held at the Treasury on 1 December 1939".

(2) Granatstein, p. 64.

Canadian Government at agreed valuation." (1)

Britain's role as the sole supplier of equipment for the 1st Division removed an obvious market from Canadian manufacturers, Rogers requested either an extension of British munitions orders in Canada or an increase in the supply of Canadian manufactured equipment to the Canadian expeditionary force. Canadian factories were over-extended in equipment and manpower. The prospect of orders from the United Kingdom was severely curtailed by the 1939 agreement and unless an adjustment was made, unemployment would become a real problem in Canada. (2) This situation was rectified after the Fall of France and an international market for Canadian products was established. (3)

The Fall of France accelerated Canada's army programme very considerably, both overseas and in Canada. The War Committee's problem was to allocate manpower in order to support:

the maximum production of equipment and supplies, and, consequently, the maintenance and development of adequate personnel in war industry, and... the relative importance of the national effort in land, sea and in the air, and consequently, the determination of the degree of emphasis to be placed upon the [three forces]. (4)

(1) Documents on Canadian External Relations, Vol. 7, No. 838, Dominion Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, 25 October 1939.

(2) PAC, W.L.M. King Papers, Vol. 427, "Rogers' Diary" 19 April 1940.

(3) Douglas and Greenhouse, p. 45.

(4) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 2, C4653A, 3 October 1940.

In June, the Government had passed the National Resources Mobilization Act, a bill which gave the Government "special emergency powers to mobilize all human and material resources for the defence of Canada." (1) There was little dispute over the Bill itself among War Committee members but there was a lot of debate as to the duration of the training period, and the distribution of conscripts between the three services and industry. Initially, 30,000 men were trained for thirty days, but this was so strongly protested by Ralston (now Minister of National Defence) and the CGS that the government was forced to re-think its position. (2)

It was at this point that lines between Committee members were drawn. C.D. Howe, the Minister of Munitions and Supply, "spoke of the serious effects of further recruiting and mobilization upon the equipment programme, through the removal of technical personnel from industry." (3) King noted that:

the shorter period had advantages from the point of view of general moral and fitted in

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- (1) Ibid., 17 June 1940. The Bill was administered by the new Department of National War Services.
- (2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) J.W. Dafoe Papers, MG30, D 45, M79, June-December 1940, Grant Dexter to Dafoe, Memorandum, Conversation with Major-General H.D. Crerar, 13 September 1940. Grant Dexter was the Ottawa correspondent for the Winnipeg Free Press, and one of J.W. Dafoe's most respected colleagues. Dexter had an inside track with Cabinet members, which gave him access to a great deal of information about their views on policy and about their relationships with their associates.
- (3) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 2, C4653A, 26 July 1940.

better with present limitations in equipment. On the other hand, a longer period for fewer numbers when practicable would more adequately meet the demands of modern mechanized warfare. (1)

In the end, a compromise was struck. The longer training period would be adopted (as of December 1940) but at the "end of the first month's training in the four month period, selections would be made from trainees for the army, navy, airforce and war industries." (2) The CGS opposed this plan, arguing against combined training, and in January 1941, the training period was further revised, delaying selection until two month's army training had been completed. (3)

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(3) Ibid. Vol. 4, C4653A, 27 January 1941. This was one of the few times where military advice was accepted.

(4) PAC, King Diary, 18 November 1940. King was criticizing a radio broadcast made by the Minister of National War Services for his emphasis on the need for increased numbers overseas, and said that such a position "lacked] political judgement".

released the government from its promise on conscription, the acrimony between Ralston and Howe became pronounced. Howe told his colleagues that "war production could not stand the continual leaching away of essential workers." (1) Ralston "couldn't get to first base with Howe" (2) and compromise was beyond reach. In June, Howe complained in the Commons over the emphasis Ralston was giving to the army overseas. After this speech, journalist B.T. Richardson commented that "Howe [is] convinced that he is in for a big fight with Ralston, but takes the view that it is time for him to move sharply into action to protect his munitions programme from the bigger army advocates." (3) Howe's concern was never resolved to his satisfaction (4) and the significant dispute between the two ministers continued to fester.

By 1941, Ralston had become a thorn in a number of the members' sides. From a Finance Minister who had protested over the cost of ancillary units, Ralston, as minister of National Defence, had come to adopt the military position. The turning point was his trip to the United Kingdom in late 1940. When he returned, he told the War Committee "he had not realized before

(1) Robert Bothwell and William Kilbourne, C.D. Howe: A Biography (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979) p.167.

(2) PAC, Dafoe Papers, M80, January to June 1942, Dexter to Dafoe, 22 May 1942.

(3) Ibid. B.T. Richardson to Dafoe, 16 June 1942.

(4) Bothwell and Kilbourne, p. 168.

visiting the United Kingdom how great was the need for men." (1) The British Army was more than occupied with operations outside England and Canadian troops were needed to defend the island. (2) By April, Ralston, who as will be pointed out had some reservations about the quality of military advice he was getting, became an advocate of conscription. He did realize "there was the political objection in the effect it would have in the country in creating divisions." (3)

In spite of his awareness of the political ramifications of conscription, Ralston could not help but favour compulsion. Certainly, it would make his job as Defence Minister easier. Ralston was having trouble raising enough recruits to maintain the divisions which the government had raised. Ralston told the War Committee that the army's static role in England:

accounted for the degree of apathy evidenced by the public as regards the war effort and prevented enthusiasm being aroused in regard to the recruiting campaign. It would be of great assistance if opportunity were to be offered for Canadians to meet the enemy, even in small scale operations. (4)

In spite of support from Power and Macdonald for Ralston's request, King refused to "countenance anything of the kind...I do

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 4, C4653A, 24 January 1941.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 24 January 1941.

(3) Ibid. 23 April 1941.

(4) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 4, C4653A, 23 April 1941.

not feel that any government has the right to take the lives of men for spectacular purposes." (1) Ralston initiated an active recruiting campaign, but when two-thirds of the time had elapsed, only 47% of the required total had been reached. (2) King was unsympathetic to Ralston's problems of raising recruits, believing that "higher wages and the certainty of employment in factories ha[d] brought numbers there." (3) King did not believe that the Army's inactivity was a problem. There was a problem with Ralston's endorsement of conscription, however, and this King tried to nip in the bud by resorting to his well-tryed tactic of a resignation threat. (4) The fact remained, though, that there was growing pressure for conscription and Ralston was its leading advocate.

The disputes between War Committee members had become a serious matter. Howe was battling against Ralston over manpower. Ralston, Power and Macdonald were pushing King to commit Canadian troops to action. Camps were being created between conscriptionists and anti-conscriptionists and King was doing his

(1) PAC, King Diary, 20 May 1941. In December 1940, it was proposed that Canadian troops be sent to the Middle East. King preferred to have the troops defend Britain, "our position being that we were at the side of Britain and not to begin to play the role of those who want Empire war." Ibid. 4 December 1940.

(2) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 5, C4653A, 20 June 1941.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 23 April 1941.

(4) Ibid. 10 June 1941.

utmost to preserve unity, among his colleagues and in the country. Since May 1940 King had tried to diffuse potential arguments by focusing the war effort on the defence of Canada, but even this created divisions in the War Committee.

The defeat of France changed the government's outlook on the war. King told his Cabinet that "we must from now on take an entirely different view of the war situation - view it as if we ourselves were to be immediately attacked and in the meantime we were seeking to give Britain all the assistance we could." (1) This assistance was limited, however, by the government's increasing emphasis on home defence. King observed:

that the result of acceding to request of the U.K. government in the military and air spheres...would be to weaken the defence of Canadian coasts. It was agreed that every effort should be made to assist the United Kingdom on the present emergency, but it should not be overlooked that, as a result, the government would be open to severe criticism in view of the statements of policy which had been made in the House that Canadian expenditures for defence purposes were being incurred for the defence of this country. (2)

On 27 June 1940, without consultation with the military, the War Committee decided "that no further commitments involving the despatch of forces or materials outside of Canada should be made without full consideration and specific authority being

(1) PAC, King Diary, 27 May 1940.

(2) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 22 May 1940.

entertained in each particular case." (1) Crerar (CGS) told the War Committee that "there was no inducement for a military invasion of this country" .(2) In spite of this advice, King continued to make home defence a priority. It was a safe political move, but as Stacey notes, the priority was "a striking example of the extent to which Canadian military policy was sometimes governed by political considerations to the exclusion of genuine military considerations and professional military advice." (3) After Pearl Harbour (and in opposition to military advice) (4) the Government stepped up its West Coast defences. (5)

The emphasis King placed on home defence was opposed by the three Defence Ministers, who were quickly becoming a fairly powerful defence lobby. Ralston told the War Committee in June 1941 that "Canada must do her utmost to hold her first line of

(1) Ibid. Vol. 2, C4653A, 26 July 1940.

(2) Ibid. 26 July 1940.

(3) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 47.

(4) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 7, C4653A, 17 December 1941.

(5) On 7 December, 2 brigades of infantry were in British Columbia. On 16 March the Chiefs recommended completing the order of battle of the 6th Division and the mobilization of 3 brigades of the 7th. On 20 March, General ~~W.~~ K. Stuart (CGS) recommended the completion of the 7th Division and the formation of the brigade groups of the 8th. Stuart is said to have made this recommendation "under political pressure, feeling that he would not retain his appointment unless he did so." Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 47. Stacey could not confirm this, however.

defence which was overseas." (1) Chubby Power, although he was against conscription, did not believe it was possible to "defend the interest and safety of Canada on Canadian soil." (2) Macdonald agreed with his colleagues. (3) Against the Defence Ministers were King, Crerar, Cardin and Howe. (4) As always, the basis of the dispute - and this would create problems for Power - was conscription. More men overseas raised the problem of reinforcements.

There was some justification for King's belief that there were few military questions which did not reduce themselves to the conscription issue. Home defence, manpower allocation and the role of the army overseas, were questions which generated controversy, the heart of which was King's desire to sustain the war effort on a voluntary basis (outside Canada) and thus retain national unity. For Mackenzie King, "the unity of the country [was] the main thing". (5) All of Canada's war policies were submerged under this priority. The problem with King's priority was that it divided the Cabinet and complicated civil-military relations. Policy was the government's domain. King was

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 5, C4653A, 20 June 1941.

(2) C.G. Power, ed. Norman Ward, A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966) p. 139.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 9 December 1941.

(4) Granatstein, p. 212.

(5) PAC, King Diary, 23 April 1941.

reluctant to make strong overseas commitments and this interfered with what other members of Cabinet (and the service chiefs who sometimes attended Cabinet meetings) considered the best distribution of resources. From a purely military perspective, they were right and King was wrong. He was unable to persuade them, and this prevented as close a collaboration as would have been desirable between the civil and military sectors. As it was, a divided civil authority was arriving at military policies that compromised between the opposing political camps. If there had been a real danger of invasion, as in the United Kingdom, national unity and strong defences would have been more compatible. There being no such danger, political and military imperatives were incompatible.

It could be argued that the War Committee of the Cabinet was a well-tuned barometer, which was able to identify the domestic pressures resulting from Canada's participation in the war. The Committee did not function as an effective agent of civil-military relations. There were too many disputes among its members and too few opportunities for direct co-operation between the soldiers and the politicians. The Committee therefore served the political imperatives and the military had to look elsewhere for a chance to exercise its influence.

The Department of National Defence was responsible for the execution of the government's military policies. At this lower level there might have been better interaction between the army

and the government. There were many provisions for solid communication. There was the Defence Council (which dealt with general policy) and the Chiefs of Staff Committee (which was the organ for inter-service co-ordination on the military level).(1) In London, there was the Canadian Military Headquarters (C.M.H.Q.) whose purpose was to liaise between the National Defence Headquarters (N.D.H.Q.) in Canada and the War Office, and the N.D.H.Q. and the Canadian Active Service Force (C.A.S.F.) in the theatres of operations.(2) These channels were only as good as the people who used them, and they all depended upon the Minister of National Defence for their effectiveness. The Minister of National Defence was, of course, a vital link with Cabinet. In 1940, as already noted, the military lobby in Cabinet increased to three by the addition of C.G. Power and Angus Macdonald. J.L. Ralston was the senior minister, the others enjoying the status of associate ministers. Ralston continued to deal with the Army.(3)

The use made of the various channels between the Army and

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 41, File "Chiefs of Staff Committee, General, Vol. 2", Memorandum on Chiefs of Staff Committee, 8 February 1943.

(2) PAC, RG24, HQS3498-Vol. 15, "The Formation of an Overseas Headquarters, C.A.S.F." Director, Military Operations to CGS, 21 September 1939.

(3) Power was appointed on 22 May 1940 and Macdonald on 12 July 1940. The system depended on a solid mesh of personalities and might have been confusing but for the good relations shared by the three men. PAC, King Diary, 30 March 1940, 20 May 1940, 17 June 1940, 28 June 1940. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 36. Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 81.

the government depended on the extent to which the Minister allowed the military to deal with military matters. Under Norman Rogers, the military appears to have had a fair amount of leeway, both in Canada and abroad. A memorandum from the CGS (Anderson) on 2 November 1939 noted that:

in the absence of an Overseas Minister, the control will have to be exercised by the Minister of National Defence and the normal channel of communications from him to commanders, whether in England or in the theatre of operations would be through the Chief of the General Staff, in respect to matters of policy and through the Head of the Branch concerned at N.D.H.Q. in matters of detail.(1)

Rogers' marginal note, "consider CGS serving both Policy and Detail" was later included in the final draft of the provisions for the organization and administration of the Canadian forces overseas.(2) The final document neatly eliminated (in theory anyway) political interference in strictly military concerns. Policy was the domain of the politicians. Its execution was the

(1) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2837, File HQC8249-Vol. 1, Anderson to the Minister, 2 November 1939.

(2) "The control of the organization and administration of Canadian Forces overseas, both in Great Britain and in the theatre of operations, will be exercised by the Minister of National Defence and the normal channel of communication between him and Commanders, whether in Great Britain or in the theatre of operations, will be through the CGS." Ibid. Anderson to the Minister, 7 December 1939.

military's concern.(1) This was the distinction which gave British civil-military relations a clear demarcation between military and political concerns, and which formed the spine of its principle of government control. It took J.L. Ralston some time to adjust his temperament to this situation.

Ralston's appointment as Defence Minister was a shrewd political move on King's part. He was one of the strongest men in King's Cabinet, a "hard, efficient man with a sharp, critical mind."(2) Ralston had returned to politics when the war broke out, as a favour to King, and had been made Finance Minister.(3) After Rogers' death King wanted Ralston as Defence Minister. He was probably the best man for the job, and he had, and King knew it, "confidence in quarters where I didn't."(4) Ralston would have preferred to stay in Finance, but his loyalty to King and his dedication to the country persuaded him to accept the new

(1) "In matters of policy the Canadian Military Headquarters in Great Britain will communicate with the Chief of the General Staff, Canada through the High Commissioner and in matters of detail it will communicate direct with the CGS... In matters of policy the G.O.C. 1st Canadian Division will deal with Canada through the High Commissioner. While he will not deal with the Canadian Military Headquarters on policy he will deal with it direct and vice versa in matters of mutual concern and in regard to details. *Ibid.* See also Public Archives of Canada (PAC), General A.G.L. McNaughton Papers, MG36, E133, Vol. 252, "War Orders and Administrative Channels of Communication to Canadian Troops Overseas, Crerar to McNaughton, 26 February 1940."

(2) PAC, Daffoe Papers, M79, June-December 1940, Grant Dexter to Daffoe, Wednesday, n.d. (September 1940).

(3) PAC, King Diary, 5 September 1939.

(4) *Ibid.* 30 May 1940.

"and very heavy burden."(1)

As well as being a loyal individual, Ralston's most outstanding characteristic was his obsession with detail. Stories about Ralston, some of them quite humorous, note the many revisions the Minister required before he approved documents and speeches.(2) Ralston's trait bespoke thoroughness, but it did not augur well for efficiency or good relations with the military establishment. General McNaughton told King in 1941 that "Ralston took far too much in the way of details into his own hand. That they all found his rather difficult. That he wanted to do too much, and had got out of his own Ministerial sphere into matters beyond it."(3)

The situation was further complicated by the limitations, or even, as so acute an observer as Dexter noted, incompetence, of the Permanent Force officers Ralston inherited when he joined the Defence Department. On 5 June 1940, Rogers had been giving "most careful consideration to the strengthening of the General Staff. The present Chief of the General Staff had been greatly pressed since the outbreak of war. Though General Anderson was, no doubt, of limited capacity [there was no one else available.]

(1) *Ibid.* 13 June, 1940. Ralston's loyalty and dedication came through in a comment he made to King that day about "not shirking any load in a situation such as the present." It is important to note also that, according to King, the only other man for the job was General McNaughton.

(2) See R.S. Malone, pp. 17-75.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 28 August 1941.

...it was agreed that provision should be made for a Deputy Chief of the General Staff... Brigadier Browne was thought to be the best." (1) Ralston shared his predecessor's opinion and spoke to the War Committee about the "difficulty of Permanent Force Officers in adjusting themselves to the new and enlarged responsibilities resulting from the war, and to the serious problem of finding suitably qualified officers for appointment to senior posts." (2) General Crerar was brought back from his post as Senior Combatant Officer, C.M.H.Q., to replace General Anderson.

Crerar discovered that Ralston had tried to solve the problem of his staff's incompetence by ignoring his military advisers altogether. In a conversation with Grant Dexter, the new CGS criticized the country's defence organization.

The organization was wrong from beginning to end. This was war and the needs of war must be paramount. ...war policy must be determined on the advice of the experts who were at the top of the services. That is, army policy must be determined on the advice of the Chief of the General Staff. At the present moment, the minister was taking advice from all directions. It was all very well to have executive assistants but they must not encroach upon the ground of high policy. ...The Chief of the General Staff was the [his emphatical military expert of the minister... When he had come to the department he had actually found that the minister and executive assistants met each morning in the ministers [sic] office and decided policy -- in the absence of the Chief

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 5 June 1940.

(2) Ibid, 27 June 1941.

of the General Staff. He had stopped that. He now attended such meetings when they were held but he indicated that matters of policy were now discussed chiefly between himself and the minister.(1)

Significant decisions had been taken without military advice, in particular the decision to lease defence facilities in Newfoundland to the United States(2) and an agreement among War Committee members "that no further commitments involving the despatch of forces or materials outside of Canada should be made, without full consideration and specific authority being obtained in each particular case."(3) Under Crerar's tutelage, policy was subsequently made with consideration of military advice (there were exceptions) but the question of the military's right to take care of the details of policy became an issue of contentious debate.

The conflict focused on the role of C.M.H.Q. in London. In December 1939, C.M.H.Q.'s role had been specified as the administrative organ of the C.A.S.F. C.M.H.Q. would exercise no command over the 1st Canadian Division.(4) The question remained, however, as to the degree of control the Army Commander

(1) PAC, Dafoe Papers, M79, June-December 1940, Dexter to Dafoe, "Memorandum of a conversation with Major-General H.D.Crerar, CGS, Friday, 13 September 1940.

(2) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 131.

(3) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 27 June 1940.

(4) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2837, File HQC 8249-Vol.1, Memorandum on the Organization and Administration of Canadian Forces Overseas, T.V.Anderson, CGS, 7 December 1939.

could have over his troops. If C.M.H.Q. was considered the 'forward echelon' of N.D.H.Q., the government's control would be direct, giving little room for the army's execution of detail. If C.M.H.Q. was seen as the 'rear echelon' of the C.A.S.F., the army would have greater control. General McNaughton preferred the latter arrangement, against the opinion of Ralston. The debate has been called "academic and not very rewarding" by Stacey(1) but in light of this discussion it cannot be so readily dismissed. The ideal situation was one General Crerar would describe in 1943.

The first role of C.M.H.Q. is that of a forward [his emphasis] extension of N.D.H.Q., functioning in closest liaison with the War Office and the Canadian Army Commander. Its second role (though not secondary in importance) is that of a rearward extension of H.Q. First Canadian Army. The organization and allocation of responsibilities should be such that while the Canadian Army Commander is generally informed as to matters under consideration at N.D.H.Q. and the War Office, and that while he is consulted by his Government, though his Minister, in questions affecting the employment and well-being of his troops, he is left as free as possible to concentrate on his actual or prospective operational tasks, and the training and organization of his troops which may be required to accomplish them [them?]. (2)

Crerar obviously believed that although policy was the

(1) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 208. McNaughton's relations with Ralston and King will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters. For now, the point is to highlight the tension between NDHQ and CMHQ.

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 52, "McNaughton Resignation File 1943", Memorandum to the Minister from General Crerar, 29 November 1943.

government's domain, its execution had to be the Army's responsibility.

The situation McNaughton encountered with Ralston was quite different. In 1941, McNaughton had raised the issue with King while the Prime Minister was in England. Things came to a head early in 1942, when McNaughton was in Canada. Then, he told Grant Dexter that Ralston:

was unable to distinguish between policy and detail...McNaughton conceded the right of the minister and the government to make decisions. The detail, however, should be worked out below this level. Ralston did not make the distinction with the result that many vitally important changes were being held up week after week... and the efficiency of our army was definitely being hurt.(1)

McNaughton threatened resignation unless Ralston gave him the "full authority he felt he should have in the matter of executing plans, once policy was settled by the Government."(2) Ralston gave way to McNaughton's demands, presumably to avoid political problems.(3) Curiously, Ralston, McNaughton and General Stuart (who had replaced Crerar as CGS in December 1941 when Crerar

(1) PAC, Dafoe Papers, M79, January-June 1942, Memorandum on conversation with McNaughton, Dexter to Dafoe, 4 March 1942 and PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 252, "War Orders", Memorandum by McNaughton, "The Organization and Administration of the Canadian Army", 5 January 1942.

(2) Pickersgill, pp. 358-359.

(3) This is the explanation put forward by R.S. Malone, PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 58, "Wartime Notes by J.L. Ralston", Correspondence for book, Missing From the Record, by Malone. The relationship between Ralston and McNaughton was very strained (although Ralston was more reserved on this than McNaughton) and it will be explored in Chapter Three.

assumed command of 1st Canadian Corps) reached the decision that C.M.H.Q. would "continue to be the advanced echelon of N.D.H.Q." (1) Not until 12 February 1943 did McNaughton receive permission to "consider C.M.H.Q. as a rear-link of 1st Cdn. Army rather than an advanced echelon of N.D.H.Q." (2)

Ralston's concession to McNaughton did not entirely solve the army's problem, although it is clear that a good deal of progress had been made. By 1942, there were problems of communication between the government and N.D.H.Q. on the one hand, and the Canadian Army Overseas, on the other. (3) When General Crerar had been CGS, he had worked hard to maintain a solid relationship with the army in England. Writing to General McNaughton, Crerar said:

there is nothing more important than to build up a sense of mutual trust and evidence of whole-hearted co-operation between the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Military Headquarters overseas. If these physically separated portions of the Canadian Army organization develop antagonisms towards one another, then national unity will suffer and with it our capacity and energy to wage war. (4)

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- (1) PAC; McNaughton Papers, Vol. 248, "War Diary, 1/3/42 - 31/3/42", Appendix 'C', "Decisions reached at Series of Discussions Between the Minister, General McNaughton and General Stuart, 17 March 1942."
- (2) Ibid. Vol. 249, "War Diary, 1/2/43 - 28/2/43", Appendix 'N', Memorandum of Conversation, General McNaughton - General Stuart at C.M.H.Q. 12 February 1943.
- (3) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 215.
- (4) Crerar to McNaughton, 6 January 1941, in Stacey, Ibid. p. 215.

As the war progressed, communication became inadequate. Stacey attributes this (in part) to resentments between field commanders and desk pilots. James Eayrs, in his study of government and foreign policy, seems to lay emphasis on the great physical distance between the organizations, saying that communications were impeded.(1) J.L. Ralston was also a factor, because of the ever increasing attention he was required to devote towards the political situation in Canada. Ralston was (in spite of his stand on conscription) committed to Canada's political stability, sometimes in a single-minded way. As the receptacle for advice from the CGS and the army overseas, Ralston was in a difficult situation.

The Colonel has demonstrated in a score or more of instances that he is bothered and rattled by conflicting advice. This puts the decision up to him and he cannot abide having to decide points which he is resolutely convinced are outside his sphere of competence. Under these circumstances he has tended steadily to narrow the channels through which advice reaches him. Today, the Chief of Staff [sic] is the only real advisor, which makes Ralston the willing, eager tool of incompetence.(2)

Beyond the personality quirk, Ralston just did not have the time to deal with the real work of the Department. The manpower fight in the Cabinet, the plebiscite and the Hong Kong inquiry (the inquiry over the Canadian debacle at Hong Kong in December 1941)

(1) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 215. Eayrs, Art of the Possible, p. 89.

(2) PAC, Dafoe Papers, M80, January-June 1942, Dexter to Dafoe, 14 April 1942.

required all of his attention.(1)

These problems aside, Ralston was probably the best ally the military had, particularly after the military's claim to take care of details had been established. Ralston was one of the few men in King's Cabinet who at least listened to the military point of view. He did not pretend to have expert military knowledge and after Crerar became CGS, he usually deferred to the generals' opinions.

Ralston knows nothing at all about army history and takes the view that his job is to act as Counsel for the General Staff -- faithfully to represent their views to the government and parliament. He thinks of Ken Stuart and the others [in Canada] as specialists and, as he once remarked, would as soon interrupt and advise a brain surgeon in the middle of an operation as to question the technical competence of the generals.(2)

He backed Crerar on the training issue(3) and he tried to persuade King to get the Canadian troops into action. He could not, however, persuade King to put military imperatives ahead of Canada's domestic interests when he felt this was the thing to do.

Although the Army had to go through Ralston and cope with

(1) Ibid. Dexter to Dafoe, 22 May 1942.

(2) Ibid. Dexter to Dafoe, 14 April 1942.

(3) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), General H.D.G. Crerar Papers, MG30, E157, Vol. 1, 958C 009(D12), Crerar to McNaughton, 4 March 1941. "I must give full credit to the Minister who backed the programme 100% and needed to use fairly strong arguments with some of his colleagues."

his idiosyncracies for the bulk of the policy decisions, in August 1942, General McNaughton earned the right "to withstand pressure for the inclusion of Canadian troops in operations which did not commend themselves to his judgement." (1) The background to this development, which represented perhaps the only clear demarcation between the civil and the military spheres, sheds light on civil-military relations in a rather useful way.

The question of the Army Commander's authority in this regard was based on the provisions of the Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act of 1933. This Act spelled out the status and relationship of Canadian forces with those of the United Kingdom. The Act contemplated two different conditions, namely:

(a) That the Forces may be "serving together" in which case each Force retains its full autonomy, and (b) That the Forces may be "acting in combination" in which case an officer of a Force shall be appointed by his majesty to exercise command over the Combined Force. (2)

The Canadian Force would be "in combination" when in Europe. On 30 December 1939, the Minister of National Defence designated the General Officer Commanding the 1st Division, C.A.S.F. and Senior Combatant Officer of C.M.H.Q. as appropriate service authorities

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 10, C4874, 14 August 1942. N.B. The powers of the Army Commander will be discussed in Chapter Three.

(2) PAC, RG24, Vol. 2837, File 8249, "CGS to the Minister: The Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act, 1933, Application to Canadian Troops in England", 28 December 1939.

to place Canadian troops in combination. It became clear, though, that the government believed General McNaughton could not commit troops without the authority of the Defence Minister.(1)

In June 1942, it became "necessary to put in hand advance planning for future operations outside [Britain] involving the use of land forces on a large scale".(2) Since McNaughton only had authority to commit troops to minor operations, a new formula had to be worked out. The War Office in London suggested that "the approval of Senior Combatant Officer overseas is required only for the general tasks or plans arising in the course of operations..."(3) Such details would be subject to the approval of the Canadian Government - and not the Commander. This suggestion was "entirely unacceptable to [Canadian] military authorities"(4) since it did not give the army control over tactical equipment and training.

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- (1) In April 1940, McNaughton committed Canadian troops to the aborted raid on Trondheim, Norway, without the Minister's permission, believing the Visiting Forces Act gave him this authority. There was a substantial dispute over McNaughton's power, and in the end, the Commander requested his authority be expanded so he could commit troops to raids and minor operations without reference to the Minister. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 208-209.
- (2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 51, High Commissioner for Canada in Great Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, No. 1630, 15 June 1942.
- (3) Ibid. High Commissioner for Canada in Britain to Secretary of State for External Affairs, No. 1980, August 1, 1942.
- (4) Ibid. High Commissioner for Canada in Britain to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, No. 1987, 3 August 1942. This was a logical suggestion for the British to make given their system of civil-military relations.

The politicians were concerned that if the War Office's suggestion was accepted:

It would raise differences of opinion in military matters to the inter-governmental level. It would create situations in which the Canadian Government would be compelled either to remove their commander or insist upon the removal of the British Commander, in order to accomplish the desired results. [Accepting the British Point of view] would put the matter above the military level and make it an inter-governmental issue. Every acceptance of an assignment would turn into a Drew-Hong Kong incident. Every rejection... would present comparable political and practical difficulties. Apart from these difficulties there is the more serious question of the lives of a large number of Canadian soldiers and the problem of winning the war, which might well be prejudiced if fundamentally military decisions were undertaken by the War Committee in Ottawa, in ignorance of the facts and of the personal factors involved. (1)

It was essential to give the Canadian Commander the power to take Canadian troops out of combination without causing a political crisis. The situation which was adopted compelled commanders in the field to solve all purely military issues. (2) The principle of government control in Canada was thus limited by the degree to which the Army needed power to prevent military issues from

(1) Ibid. Memorandum concerning relations between Canada and the United Kingdom Armies in dealing with points discussed at Meeting of War Committee of the Cabinet, 14 August 1942.

(2) In the next chapter, it will be shown that the government had a rather arbitrary definition of 'military issues.'

becoming political crises.(1) The authority which was gradually vested in the Army Commander represented the only real exception to the Canadian Government's control over the war effort. As we shall see later, this authority had its limits where General McNaughton was concerned.

Canada's wartime civil-military relations were shaped by the weight of the political imperatives created by Canada's participation in the Second World War. Circumstances rarely required the politicians to put aside domestic issues until military demands had been met. Quite the contrary, domestic issues remained at the forefront of debate, especially the government's concern that the nation survive the war with its unity intact. The structures within which the Canadian effort was directed were designed to provide substantial interaction between the civil and military spheres. Nevertheless, the use made of those structures did not live up to the military's expectations that the state of war would increase its influence.

The practice of Canada's civil-military relations during the Second World War depended on politics for its motivation and on personality for its execution. The basis of the military's power

(1) This tendency was also illustrated in February 1940 (although to a lesser degree) when it was explained that the announcement to despatch the 2nd Division overseas, made on 25 January, "had been made before the dissolution of Parliament, in order that any question of the further despatch of troops should be kept apart from political controversy." PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1, C4653A, 12 February 1940.

resided in its ability to work with politicians who consciously made all their decisions with reference to a domestic political framework. The demarcation between the two spheres was vague, since there was very little to do with either policy or detail which did not fall into the politicians' realm. In Great Britain and the United States, the war had increased the power of the military because both governments depended on military expertise for the execution of the nations' will. In Canada, the King Government depended on the principle of national unity for all its war policies. The war seemed to have created a situation in which the military's power actually had to be curtailed, rather than expanded. For the politicians and the generals in Canada, it was a very political war.

Caught in the Crossfire

On the homefront, the King Government had deliberately made its decisions on war policies with reference to a domestic, political framework. The war had done very little to increase the military's influence over policy. The institution of Canada's wartime civil-military relations had been shaped by political, and not military, imperatives. The next question, then, is whether those imperatives could be reconciled in the administration of the Canadian Army. This question will lead towards an evaluation of how politics affected the disposition and effectiveness of the Canadian forces overseas.

In order to illustrate the dynamics of Canada's wartime civil-military relations, this chapter will focus on General A.G.L. McNaughton's tenure (1939-1943) as Commander of the Canadian forces overseas. McNaughton's position as commander encapsulated all the tensions between the two arms of government, hence his significance to this study. What his command shows, in the final analysis, is the incompatibility of the political and military logics which were necessarily combined in his command.

The effects of this incompatibility have been discussed in relation to Canada's war policies, and in terms of the military's right to take care of those policies' details. This chapter will examine two crucial military issues - the extent of McNaughton's

authority and the disposition of the troops - with a view towards illustrating McNaughton's attempts to minimize ministerial interference. His interpretation of his authority was quite different from the government's, even though eventually, the commander's powers were increased. The government made it very clear, however, that it could and would intrude into what McNaughton considered the military sphere. The extent to which this would happen depended largely upon the politicians' reading of Canada's domestic stability. It would also be affected by McNaughton's loss of credibility with the government over the Dieppe and "Spartan" fiascos and by his severe opposition to the plan to divide the Army in 1943. In the end, the Army commander became caught inextricably in a struggle between the politicians and the generals over how Canada's army could be most usefully employed.

At first, General McNaughton's appointment as commander of the First Canadian Division appeared to combine political with military logic: his ideals were compatible with the political issues which had been raised by the war; and militarily, he was probably the best commander Canada had to offer. Indeed, McNaughton reconciled the two sets of imperatives with each other so effectively that Mackenzie King, an inveterate army-hater, gave him his complete confidence and trust.⁽¹⁾ McNaughton saw his desire for a balanced war effort, and for a voluntary army,

(1) J.W. Pickersgill, The Mackenzie King Record Vol. 1, 1939-1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1960) p. 38.

as giving full expression to Canada's national status. Such ideals complemented the Prime Minister's attitude towards the war. This harmony, supported by the General's enormous popularity in Canada, caused King to comment that "no better man could be selected, certainly not one whose appointment would meet more with general approval." (1)

The basis of King's trust in McNaughton probably stemmed from their accord on the allocation of manpower to the war. Both agreed that Canada's war effort should strike a balance between industrial mobilization and a commitment of troops to active service. Although their reasons were different, they were complementary. King kept a wary eye on the stability of the wartime economy and he wanted to avoid conscription. McNaughton was interested in developing a fully equipped force to increase battle efficiency and to lower casualty rates. The latter was of particular importance to King, since it reduced the spectre of a reinforcement problem. In the First World War, McNaughton's counter-battery work had had as its sole purpose "the protection of the infantry from the fire of the hostile artillery", its added benefit being accuracy of fire power. (2) McNaughton declared in 1939 that he was insistent on "using guns rather than

(1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, MG26, J13, 22 September, 1939.

(2) Brigadier-General A.G.L. McNaughton, "Counter-Battery Work", Canadian Defense Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 4, July 1926, p. 380.

the lives of our troops".(1) McNaughton told King that "he would not incur the responsibility of a command which would necessarily risk human lives because of not having what was essential in a practical way for protecting his own men."(2) This was a declaration from which King could take comfort.

McNaughton believed it was important for Canada to have her own munitions industry. In December, 1939, he warned King that "the moment would come when...[Britain] would have to look to us to supply her own equipment, munitions, etc."(3) To this end, orders would have to be encouraged and factories would need the manpower to produce the equipment. McNaughton had worried in September that:

under a system of voluntary service in the Armed Forces there is a probability, having regard to the character of the Canadian people, that many men with the highest qualifications of all sorts will seek active service.(4)

Industry could well be deprived of the "skilled engineers, mechanics etc. on whom rapid expansion of production--

(1) Montreal Star, 20 November 1939, quoted in James Eayrs, The Art of the Possible: Government and Foreign Policy in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) p. 77.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 6 October 1939.

(3) Ibid, 7 December 1939.

(4) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), J.L. Ralston Papers, MG27,111 B11, Vol. 51, "McNaughton Report", The Supply of Skilled Men and Tradesmen to the Armed Forces and to Industry. Memorandum by A.G.L. McNaughton, 11 September 1939.

(5) Ibid.

depends."(5) The solution was to strike a balance, keeping the size of the army proportional to the nation's industrial capacity. McNaughton would write in 1940 that "we in Canada must have a balanced war effort, so if they need and wish more men in the army, then they must co-operate by giving more orders to our industry."⁽¹⁾ In 1930 he had written:

[t]he whole question of the right forces to maintain, like many engineering problems, is a question of proper balance between conflicting factors -- quantity and quality of materials available; the time in which to use them; the risks to be run -- the factors of safety to be used. It is our business as soldiers to know all there is to know about the quantity and quality of our materials of construction -- animate as well as inanimate --"(2)

McNaughton expanded on this point in 1942, when he told Grant Dexter that "it was a misunderstanding of the war to think that military manpower was of great importance. The real and only need was for production. A man in the factory is worth more than a man in the army."⁽³⁾ As the reader will recall, this was a position which most of the Cabinet War Committee members understood.

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- (1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), General A.G.L. McNaughton Papers, MG30, E133, Vol. 244, "Misc. Correspondence "H", 1939-1940, McNaughton to E. Holt Gurney, 29 April 1940.
- (2) Major-General A.G.L. McNaughton, "The Military Engineer and Canadian Defence", An address delivered before the Military Engineers' Association, Ottawa, 8 April 1929, Canadian Defence Quarterly, Vol. VII, No. 2, January 1930, p. 151.
- (3) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), J.W. Dafoe Papers, MG30, D45, Reel M80, January to June 1942, Grant Dexter to J.W. Dafoe, Memorandum on 28 February dinner at Horace Hunter, 4 March 1942.

Given the importance McNaughton placed on industrial mobilization, it was logical for him to oppose conscription. He had worried that voluntary enlistment might deplete the numbers of skilled workmen, and in his view it followed that conscription would have had a similar counter-productive effect on the war effort. He was interested in "selective service, getting into the Army the best men qualified, and getting into industry those men that would serve there." (1) The "government's job was to decide on the allocation of manpower between the Armed Forces, Industry, Agriculture etc." (2) The Army's job was to "plan most carefully as respects disposition of manpower." (3) McNaughton talked with King about "the effect of conscription in the last war, saying that it had not proved to be a help, that men that were conscripted were not of any real service." (4) In 1942 he told King that "conscription, today, would be an embarrassment, indeed I cannot see how for eight months hence we can deal with more men." (5)

McNaughton understood fully that conscription was anathema to national unity. He and King did not discuss conscription in

(1) PAC, King Diary, 17 March 1942.

(2) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 249, War Diary, 1/1/43 - 31/1/43, Appx. "Q", Memorandum of Press Conference 22 January 1943.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 28 August 1941.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid., 17 March 1942.

depth until 1941, but when they did, it was made quite clear that both men opposed it. McNaughton agreed with King that "national unity was more important than all else."⁽¹⁾ McNaughton's biographer noted that he had a deep appreciation for the political disruption conscription would bring⁽²⁾ and that although McNaughton disagreed with King's promise of "no conscription", he believed it was a promise which had to be kept.⁽³⁾ King was convinced that McNaughton would do his utmost to help the government honour this pledge.⁽⁴⁾

Perhaps the most important of McNaughton's ideals was his firm belief that national control of Canada's troops was the "acid test of sovereignty".⁽⁵⁾ Canada's autonomy had been developed on the battlefields of the First World War and by the inter-war years:

the senior Canadian commanders...accepted the principle that to achieve its potential as a professionally competent fighting force, the Canadian Army must be kept together under Canadian command in any future conflict.⁽⁶⁾

(1) PAC, King Diary, 28 August 1941 and 17 March 1942.

(2) John Swettenham, McNaughton Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1968 and 1969), pp. 121-122 and 183-192.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 17 March 1942.

(4) Ibid, 4 February 1942.

(5) C.P. Stacey, A Date With History (Ottawa: Deneau, 1982) p. 77.

(6) Stephen Harris, "Canadian Brass: The Growth of the Canadian Military Profession, 1860-1919." (unpublished Ph.D dissertation, Duke University, 1979) p. 201.

Canada's real victory in the First World War had been her establishment of the:

means to control all but the tactical disposition of [her] expeditionary force. A force which had entered the war as virtually an integral part of the British Army had developed in three years virtually to the status of an allied army. It was both a paradigm and a precedent for Canada's own transformation from self-governing colony to sovereign nation. (1)

It was a victory McNaughton had witnessed first hand when General Sir Arthur Currie fought for the integrity of the Canadian Corps in 1918 against Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's wishes. (2) The lesson McNaughton had drawn from the consequences of Currie's stand was that the Canadian Corps had been effective because it had been a homogeneous unit.

McNaughton's opinion became something like a credo during the inter-war years. In his "Principles of Imperial Defence: A Canadian Aspect", a lecture paper written at the Imperial Defence College in 1927, McNaughton had traced Canada's constitutional evolution from colony to nation. By 1926, he wrote, Canada had "a position which accords to her that liberty of action in the control of her internal affairs and in the development of her

(1) Desmond Morton, A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) p. 169.

(2) Swettenham, Vol. 1, pp 118-132.

interests abroad which her leaders hold to be essential." (1) The implications of Canadian autonomy for the Army were quite clear. The forces would be self-contained units, directly responsible to the Canadian government. (2) The Statute of Westminster and the Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act, which came into effect in 1933, secured these principles on a statutory basis. McNaughton had been involved in the institution of these acts thus he "knew very well what this legislation meant for Canada and he refused to surrender a particle of it thereafter." (3)

McNaughton's insistence on the integrity of the Canadian forces in the Second World War became the foundation for the development of the Army. It formed part of his rationale for a balanced force (the other part being battle efficiency) and it was a conception which brought him into conflict with the government at the time of his appointment. On 4 October 1939, McNaughton and Norman Rogers (the then Minister of National Defence) met, and McNaughton was told that "Canadian forces

(1) Directorate of History, Department of National Defence (DHIST), 1123M2.009 (D10), A.G.L. McNaughton, "Principles of Imperial Defence: A Canadian Aspect", 1927, p. 49.

(2) Ibid, p. 29.

(3) Swettenham, Vol. 1, p. 253. McNaughton would later disagree with King's unwillingness to assert Canada's right to a voice on the Allied strategic councils. It is doubtful if he understood that "King never hoped or expected to be given a real voice in the management of affairs. All he wanted was a semblance so outwardly convincing that to the uninstructed Canadians it would look like the real thing." Donald Creighton, The Forked Road: Canada, 1939-1957 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) p.66.

should not be large and of such a size as to be a restriction on full development in the air and munitions supply."(1) In the interests of economy, Ralston (then Minister of Finance) had suggested that ancillary units to the First Division might be borrowed from the British.(2) This would have undermined Canada's ability to control her own troops and McNaughton demanded a self-contained formation. On 6 October, a compromise was reached between McNaughton, King, Rogers and Ralston. McNaughton held out for "the minimum of a complete division: that there might be in time a second division necessary. He referred to it as constituting a corps but he was not asking for that at present. Rogers interposed by saying that would depend upon the course of events as the war continued, and McNaughton agreed that was the case."(3) McNaughton's goal was a self-sufficient corps (planned for by the Chiefs of Staff in September) but he would have to wait until December 1940 for that. Then the rationale for the First Canadian Corps, from King's point of view, was to give a "national expression to our forces overseas."(4) When eventually on 6 April 1942, Headquarters First Canadian Army was formed, it represented a greater 'national expression' than McNaughton had ever dreamed.

(1) C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945 (Ottawa, Queen's Printer, 1970) p. 14.

(2) Ibid.

(3) PAC, King Diary, 6 October 1939.

(4) Ibid., 2 April 1940.

McNaughton's views on conscription, autonomy and industrial mobilization formed the substance of his command. They all had strong military rationales and they were complementary to the political imperatives of Canada's war. McNaughton's political sensitivity had earned him the championship of the Prime Minister but it would be a mistake to think that McNaughton was more politician than soldier. He was simply the product of the peculiar mix of military and political pressures which had been necessarily combined in Canada's military profession. (1) The Canadian Army commander in the Second World War:

had to be somebody who knew Canada, understood Canadians and...all [the] struggles and stresses and pulls that make up our country. Whoever had the job had to know the political and industrial structure of Canada and he had to have a military background and an ability to construct

(1) Samuel Huntington's concept, the 'military mind', is worth consideration. He lists attributes which typify those held by people who serve the military function. He says the "military mind is disciplined, rigid, logical, scientific; it is not flexible, tolerant, intuitive, emotional; The continuous performance of the military function may well give rise to these qualities." S.P. Huntington, The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957) p. 60. The key to his typology is his last sentence. Since it is the continuous performance of the military function which generates these attributes, and since most of Canada's generals in the Second World War did not have continuous performance of the military function behind them, it was difficult for senior Canadian officers to escape cognizance of political pressures.

something out of practically nothing.(1)

McNaughton could reasonably claim all of these attributes.

The significance of McNaughton's ideals is that, initially they reconciled the political and military imperatives of Canada's war. His sensitivity to the manpower and autonomy issues were, for him, essential components of his command. When Mackenzie King appointed McNaughton in 1939, he told him he wished to avoid any conflicts between the civil and the military authorities. There should be "utmost confidence on both sides. The Government would have to decide its policy and take responsibility for it but would, within lines agreed upon, be solidly behind the military authorities."(2) Happily, it looked to King as though McNaughton was solidly behind the political authorities. But the extent to which McNaughton would be permitted to exercise his military judgement had not been resolved. There were no precedents to fall back on. The First World War had demonstrated that the friction between the Overseas Ministry in London and the field army in France had been inimical to the effective organization of the Canadian Corps.(3) The

(1) Interview, Major-General D.C. - Spry, CBE, DSO, OBE, Ottawa, Ontario, 16 May 1985. General Spry was chosen for staff duties with the First Canadian Division in 1939 and was a member of the British, American, Canadian planning group. He served as McNaughton's P.A. from 1942 to August 1943 when he took over the command of the Royal Canadian Regiment in Sicily. In August 1944 he was GOC Third Canadian Division and in 1946 he served as Vice-Chief of the General Staff.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 6 October 1939.

(3) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 206.

government had learned how to entrench the autonomy of its field force, but it did not yet understand the acceptable limits to its control over the commander of that force.

Canadian control over the armed forces had been instituted on a formal basis through the Visiting Forces Act in 1931. That control was further entrenched by the Cabinet War Committee's 1942 decision to give McNaughton the authority to execute his discretion over committing troops to large-scale operations. More difficult to establish, however, were the limits to the Canadian Government's control over its army commander. Theoretically, McNaughton had the power to place troops in combination, "provided always that any of said Canadian Military Forces shall only be so detailed by the Canadian Service Authority... if in his opinion such action is necessitated by military exigencies of the moment." (1) This seemed straight-forward, but McNaughton's authority was questioned in April 1940 when he placed a portion of the First Division in combination with British troops without reference to the Canadian Government.

(1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Records of the Department of National Defence, RG24, Vol. 2837, file 8249, "The Visiting Forces (British Commonwealth) Act 1933, Application to Canadian Troops in England. CGS to the Minister, 28 December 1939. On 30 December 1939, the Minister designated the General Officer Commanding First Canadian Division, C.A.S.F. and Senior Combatant Officer, C.M.H.Q. as appropriate service authorities. (N.B. McNaughton was technically both, since the Canadian Forces were based in England. This had not been anticipated in 1939 and it put McNaughton into a quasi-political role. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 207.

One week after Germany's invasion of Norway, the British command decided to capture ports in Norway's west coast in order to resist German advances from the south. Plans to assault the town of Trondheim on 25 April were laid.(1) On 16 April, Major-General R.H. Dewing (Director, Military Operations, War Office) went to C.M.H.Q. and suggested Canadians might participate in the proposed combined operation. At 1330 hours, McNaughton made the decision to "place parties at the disposal of War Office for combined operations, Deputy Judge Advocate General's opinion being that he could legally take such action."(2) On the evening of 17 April, McNaughton wired Ottawa.

In consequence developments military situation Norway, need for prompt action, and non-availability sufficient suitably trained British troops, military exigencies of moment require participation Canadian troops. Accordingly and after full consultation with War Office on details I have designated part of Second Canadian Infantry Brigade under command SANSOM plus ancillary detachments artillery, engineers, signals, medicals and administrative totalling 1300 approximately to act in combination special British force being organized for Combined Operation with Royal Navy. Under present plans Canadian force leaves Aldershot 1800 hours tomorrow 18 April. Utmost secrecy important...prompt reports on progress of operation will be cabled to you as available.(3)

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- (1) DHIST, 112.1(D65), Col. A.F. Duguid, Report on Employment of CAO, 13 May 1941.
- (2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), General H.D.G. Crerar Papers, MG30, E157, Vol. 15, 958C.009 (D271), War Diary, 16 April 1940.
- (3) PAC, RG24, Vol. 12,304, 3/Norway/1, G.S. 327 McNaughton for Minister of National Defence 17 April 1940. The thirty hour delay was inappropriate. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 208.

McNaughton's telegram virtually quoted the Defence Minister's designation of December 1939 and it is doubtful whether he ever imagined his action would be censured. It was.

In the absence of Norman Rogers, then enroute to England, J.L. Ralston, the Acting Prime Minister, responded to the telegram and told McNaughton that:

In view of circumstances set forth in your G.S. 327 despatch of Forces mentioned is approved. It is considered that such a commitment should not have been entered without prior reference to National Defence and approval of Canadian Government. (1)

A further communication said:

We feel that when consultation commenced intimation should have at once been given...to afford Canadian Government reasonable opportunity to pass on a disposition of such importance to Canadian people as... a special Mission of this kind...is a radical departure pre-considered policy and plan. (2)

Vincent Massey, High Commissioner and senior Canadian civil representative in London (3) replied that McNaughton had made full enquiries as to his legal situation and had satisfied himself that the situation required an immediate issue of orders to

(1) Ibid. External to Dominion, No. 414, 17 April 1940.

(2) Ibid. External to Dominion, No. 415, 17 April 1940. The 1st Division had been designated, since 18 March, for the Western Fronts in France. Duguid, Report on Employment CAO, 13 May 1941.

(3) or as he puts it, "governmental nanny to the military staff" Vincent Massey, What's Past is Prologue: the memoirs of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, C.H. (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd. 1963) p. 320.

despatch the Canadian troops. "In discharge of his responsibility this matter actions of the GOC were based on designation of Minister under authority P.C. 3391.(1) Ralston replied that "P.C. 3391 in detailing forces to act in combination is not considered to relate to service beyond United Kingdom."(2) Ralston was technically correct. There was no provision for the GOC to place Canadian troops in combination for service outside of Britain. In 1941, he explained the situation to the Commons, in response to questions from the Opposition.

On 31 March 1941, Grote Stirling (Conservative member for Yale and former Defence Minister in Bennett's Cabinet) asked Ralston to clarify the Canadian Force's position in reference to the British Army. "To what extent is it an entity whose organization, administration and operations are entirely in the hands of the Canadian General Staff and, behind the General Staff, the minister and the government... Is the decision with regard to where the Canadian forces may be used entirely at the discretion of this government?"(3) Ralston replied that the Canadian forces were responsible, through the GOC and the senior officer at C.M.H.Q. to the Canadian Government. The GOC was obliged to consult the Canadian government before committing

(1) PAC, RG24, Vol. 13,722, War Diary, 1 Canadian Division, 1/4/40-30/4/40, Appx. 'N', Massey to External, 18 April 1940. External Affairs shared Ralston's indignation.

(2) Ibid. External to Dominion, 19 April 1940.

(3) Debates, Canadian House of Commons, Vol. 11, 31 March 1941, p. 2004.

troops to action. P.C. 3391 "applied only to the operation of troops in the United Kingdom, not outside." (1) It was not a case of ratification, but of approval. Furthermore, Ralston said "the appropriate Canadian service authority cannot authorize the embarkation of Canadian forces from the United Kingdom without the authority of the Minister of National Defence." (2) The Order-in-Council which covered this contingency, P.C. 1066, did not leave the question of Canadian troops serving 'in combination' to the discretion of the GOC. "[A]ssuming that embarkation has taken place by reason of the approval and authorization of the Canadian government, then automatically upon that embarkation, Canadian troops serve in combination with the troops of the United Kingdom on the Continent." (3) General McNaughton had exceeded the bounds of his authority when he had placed troops 'in combination' for the Trondheim expedition.

Ralston's stand in April 1940 was in keeping with his fanaticism for detail, but it missed the military trees for the political forest. Norman Rogers, who arrived in London on 19 April 1940 had a more flexible approach to the matter. On 22 April, he wired Ralston.

Further consideration is now being given to the effect of P.C. 3391 in light of present circumstances for the purpose of arriving at a surer understanding and clearing up existing legal situation... wish to

(1) Ibid. p. 2005.

(2) Ibid. April 1, 1941, p. 2049.

(3) Ibid. p. 2049.

emphasize that there are dynamic features in present military situation which argue against too rigid limitation upon actions taken to meet possible emergencies.(1)

This, perhaps, was the better approach, because the existing legislation had been unequal to the situation. In his diary, Rogers expanded on the problem.

It was quite evident from the recital of the events which had occurred before my arrival in London that the matter was of extreme urgency and if Canadian troops had not been made available immediately the War Office would have been obliged to seek troops elsewhere. The movement itself had to be carried out with the utmost secrecy to be successful. This fact, no doubt, made it more difficult to reproduce through cable despatch the actual situation under which General McNaughton was obliged to accept or reject the proposal.(2)

Although the expedition to Trondheim never took place(3) the incident is not without its significance. On one level, it raised questions over McNaughton's authority as GOC, but more importantly, it showed the potential for that authority to be interpreted in various ways. The attention the incident received

(1) PAC, RG24, 12,304, 3/Norway/1, No. 476, Rogers to External, 22 April 1940.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, MG26, J4, Vol. 427, "Rogers Diary 1940", 20 April 1940. King had made a marginal note about telegram no. 414, which, he said, had been "sent during my absence without knowledge or authorization." As Acting Prime Minister, Ralston was within his rights to send the message, but King's note hints at a 'hands off' policy where McNaughton was concerned.

(3) It was cancelled 20 April 1940. PAC, Crerar Papers, Vol. 15, 9581.009 (D271) War Diary, 20 April 1940.

in the Commons indicates that the matter of government approval was an important one. As well, the incident raises questions about the implications of Ralston's distinction between ratification and approval.(1) Apparently, McNaughton's military judgement could be assessed and potentially over-ruled on the basis of political criteria.(2) Government control requires a certain degree of ministerial interference in military affairs, but presumably, not to the extent that it hinders the military effectiveness of the fighting forces. Such potentially damaging interference had almost happened during the Trondheim affair, and it is exactly what happened in 1943.

Trondheim produced one other important effect: it destroyed the already modest amount of trust McNaughton had in Ralston.

(1) As Ralston said in 1941, "Honourable members can realize that, on the ground, plans would be made in the expectation that the Canadian government would ratify the judgement of the officer commanding the Canadian Corps, if he saw fit to commit his troops; but in connection with [Norway] I have a distinct recollection of communications indicating most clearly that the Canadian government must be consulted with regard to matters of this kind. It is not a case of ratification; it is a case of approval...Beforehand. Debates, Canadian House of Commons, Vol. 1, 31 March 1941, p. 2005.

(2) Hankey's concept of government control included occasions where political interference in military matters was justified. "If the strategy of a Commander-in-Chief involves such a drain on the total resources of the State...as to imperil the staying power of the nations concerned, or the conduct of some equally essential operation elsewhere, the Governments concerned may have to intervene." Rt. Hon. Lord Hankey, The Lees Knowles Lecture, 1945, Government Control in War (Cambridge: at the University Press, 1945) p. 13. The reader should note that Hankey's criteria for interference had significance to national survival and to the war effort in general.

Ralston insisted that the matter should have been referred to Canada for decision...He kept this up to a point where I felt that if every time I had an operation on my hands I had to spend time on the etiquette of my association with the Department of National Defence across the Atlantic it was a pretty hopeless situation. I think, looking back at it, this broke what little trust I had in Ralston as a minister and I never regained it.(1)

After Trondheim, McNaughton and Ralston were like "two dogs sniffing at one another."(2) Their antipathy, particularly as it became more and more pronounced,(3) became a source of considerable anxiety for the Prime Minister. Ralston was essential to the war effort, and if he were provoked into

(1) Swettenham, Vol. 2, p. 53 CBC Interviews; McNaughton Interview, 25 August 1965. McNaughton's stormy relations with Ralston dated back to their association as CGS and Defence Minister (1926-1930). Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 209. McNaughton had fought Ralston's opposition to the construction of a Dominion Arsenal without success. James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. 1, From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964) p. 315. Had the Liberals not lost the 1930 general election, McNaughton said he would have resigned his post. PAC, King Diary, 17 March 1942 and Swettenham, Vol. 1, p. 243. McNaughton did not take into account the Liberal's intransigence on military spending, it seems.

(2) Telephone Interview, Major-General D.C. Spry, Ottawa, Ontario, 14 March 1985.

(3) During McNaughton's trip to Canada in 1942, Grant Dexter reported that McNaughton was "death" on Ralston. McNaughton complained of Ralston's incompetence "over and over again to influential people in Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa" and Dexter believed that "we will see an anti-Ralston campaign break out very soon." (Public Archives of Canada (PAC), J.W. Daffoe Papers, MG30 D45, M80, January to June 1942, Dexter to Daffoe, 4 March 1942.)

resigning, King believed a general election would be necessary.(1) Then too, McNaughton was equally (or perhaps more) important, since he had a strong hold on the Canadian public and, as far as the Prime Minister was concerned, he served as a bulwark against conscription.(2) The onus was on the Prime Minister to prevent a clash between Ralston and McNaughton and for as long as King believed that both men were indispensable to the war effort, he did a great deal to smooth ruffled feathers.(3) In spite of King's efforts, McNaughton never again believed that the Minister gave the Army his full support - and

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- (1) PAC, King Diary, 8 July 1942. The fact remains though that King did more to appease McNaughton than Ralston, since it always seemed it was Ralston who had to give way. Perhaps King was counting on Ralston's formidable sense of duty to remain in the government (with two exceptions, of course).
- (2) Ibid. 10 November 1943. "McNaughton has many more friends than Ralston in the country." When the subject of replacing McNaughton with Grerar was raised in 1943, King wrote that "one danger...is that Grerar may seek to bring about conscription."
- (3) In 1942, King tried to talk Ralston out of going to England to meet with McNaughton. (PAC, King Diary, 5 February 1942). He made Ralston give way to McNaughton's demands for more autonomy in the same year, (Ibid. 8 July 1942) and he gave McNaughton the right to report to the Prime Minister directly any time the GOC and the Minister did not see eye to eye. (PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 249, War Diary, 1/12/42 - 31/12/42, Appx. "P", "Memorandum of a discussion between McNaughton and Captain Gilchrist (A/PRO), 28 December 1942).

erroneous judgement which became the GOC's obsession.(1)

McNaughton would never be permitted to commit troops to large-scale operations without the government's approval, but eventually, his authority was extended to include operations based on the British Isles.(2) When Mackenzie King went to England in 1941, McNaughton broached the subject of his authority with him.(3) On 31 July 1941, McNaughton had been given the

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- (1) Other accounts deal with Ralston and McNaughton's tempestuous relations. Some have the motive of one or the other's exoneration. Swettenham's biography goes perhaps too far to gild McNaughton's lily, while Richard Malone takes Ralston's side with vehemence. Stacey acknowledges the feud diplomatically, and defends both men where a defence is appropriate. His work, Arms, Men and Governments gives the best perspective on the subject. From my own reading of the documents, McNaughton seems to have been easily pressed to react to the Defence Minister when he became too caught up with detail. McNaughton was less than discreet on a number of occasions and his treatment of Ralston during the fall of 1943 was less than professional. Ralston does not appear to have reacted in the same fashion. On only one occasion did I find Ralston making a personal comment about McNaughton. While discussing McNaughton's opposition to the division of the Canadian Army (1943) Ralston referred to "the Jekyll and Hyde attitude of McNaughton". (PAC, King Diary, 4 February 1944). There is no assurance, however, that Ralston was blameless since he might just have been being discreet in his papers. There does not seem to be much point to reproducing the details of the feud, because on the whole, it did not intrude heavily into the conduct of civil-military relations. There exists the danger of taking sides, which, as Swettenham and Malone have shown, does not produce very good history.
- (2) C.P. Stacey, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Vol. 1, Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1955) p. 263.
- (3) Ibid.

authority to commit troops to the raid on Spitzbergen(1) "on the assumption that the project had received the full consideration and approval of the U.K. government." McNaughton could act on his "own judgement, having regard to the prospect of success and the risks involved." (2) McNaughton felt, however, that his authority should be better defined by the government. In September, King raised the issue at the Cabinet War Committee, saying that the "statement of the Minister of National Defence in the House of Commons had, in his view, gone too far in limiting the GOC's authority." (3) Ralston replied that legally, McNaughton had to get the government's approval, but added that "it might be that General McNaughton's authority should be extended to include operations based upon the British Isles." (4).

The issue was finally resolved in October 1941. At a meeting between Ralston, McNaughton and General Crerar (CGS) the GOC "made strong representations concerning his authority to undertake minor raids and operations such as...Spitzbergen...without the necessity of obtaining Cabinet authority in each case...the requirements of secrecy prevented

(1) The Cabinet War Committee did not know the objective of the August/September 1941 raid. Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 209.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Records of the Privy Council, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, RG2, 7C, Vol. VI, C4654, 31 July 1941.

(3) Ibid. 10 September 1941.

(4) Ibid.

communication of these projects, in advance, to governmental authority. (1) On 29 October, the War Committee generalized the special authority it had given to McNaughton in July to cover minor raids. (2) McNaughton's authority was extended again in May 1942 when, at McNaughton's request, the qualification 'minor' was deleted. Permission was granted, provided the operation was a raid, "rather than in the form of an expeditionary force of invasion and occupation." (3)

The government had not been insensitive to the military exigencies under which McNaughton had to act, but a long time passed before it realized that perhaps governments are not always in the best position to weigh the myriad factors involved in military actions. Eventually, McNaughton had been given the authority, however limited, to act according to his professional judgement. While he had by no means minimized the weight of political imperatives in his command, he could at least deal with military situations. Implied in the government's concessions to McNaughton's military judgement was a measure of trust. Of course, this trust had not yet been tested on the battlefield. McNaughton's final request for an extension of his authority was

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- (1) PAC, Crerar Papers, Vol. 15, 958C.009 (D269), War Diary, 25 October 1941.
- (2) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. VI, C4654, 29 October 1941. This extension was subject to the same assumptions as the Committee's July decision.
- (3) Ibid. Vol. IX, C4874, 1 May 1942 and PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 51, "McNaughton, 1939-1945", McNaughton to General K. Stuart, 30 April 1942.

in preparation for the raid on Dieppe. The 1st and 2nd Divisions had been in England since 1940 and apart from the 1st Division's limited participation in France and Spitzbergen, the Canadians had played a defensive role in Southern England. Now, the time for action had come, and with it, an opportunity for the government to test the mettle of its Army commander.

-II-

Until now, this thesis has studied the significant impact of political imperatives on the institution of Canadian civil-military relations. It is now time to broaden this study so that it can encompass some of the war's military operations. Of particular relevance is the extent to which the political issues generated by Canada's war effort affected the disposition and effectiveness of the Canadian army. In spite of McNaughton's apparent reconciliation of political and military imperatives in his command, domestic pressures in Canada became impossible for him to control. The 'ideal' commander fell out of step with the Canadian government, and, in the opinion of the British authorities, he became a military liability overseas. The pressures which led to these judgements had an enormous impact on the Canadian Army, and their political content stands as a significant illustration of the ascendancy of civil over military imperatives in Canada's war.

The raid on Dieppe, 19 August 1942, is a good example of the effect political pressures could have on the Canadian military authorities. The Canadians pressed for involvement in the raid, in spite of the troops' inexperience, and they did so against the wishes of the British High Command. Dieppe also illustrates another facet of McNaughton's command, which, although quite separate from the issue of the Canadians' involvement, would be

instrumental in harming McNaughton's credibility with the British. That facet, of course, is the question of Canadian control over its army. McNaughton's involvement in the raid was minimal (except on this latter point) but it was his responsibility to approve Canadian participation, on the basis of the War Committee's instruction that "he should not hesitate to withhold approval to any ventures that appeared questionable." (1)

The decision to raid Dieppe was the product of the Target Committee of Combined Operations Headquarters. (2) On 3 April 1942, the Target Committee met to develop a definite plan, which was completed on 25 April. As of then "no officer had had anything to do with the planning, nor had any Canadian, the record indicates, even known that an attack on Dieppe was contemplated." (3) McNaughton was first approached on 30 April by General Montgomery (South-Eastern Command and army authority responsible for the military details of "Rutter") and he agreed

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. 1X, C4874, 8 May 1942.

(2) C.O.H.Q., headed since March 1942 by Lord Louis Mountbatten, had been formed to organize raids on enemy strong-holds and to develop the equipment and technique for amphibious operations in preparation for a large-scale invasion of North-West Europe. In 1942, the biggest problem facing C.O.H.Q. involved the acquisition of a major port. Dieppe was selected as an objective because of its proximity to Newhaven and because it had a good harbour. Stacey, Six Years of War, pp. 325-341. Originally code-named "Rutter", the raid was to have taken place on or about 4 July. Poor weather caused the operation to be cancelled. It was revived about 14 July and came off on 19 August.

(3) Ibid. p. 329.

to Canadian participation, subject to the details of the plan.(1) The Second Division was nominated for the raid, and its training began immediately.

Why were the Canadians involved? Since 1940, McNaughton had worked to make the Canadians into a "mobile reserve with a 360 degree front"(2) for the sole purpose of defending Southern England until such time as they could be usefully employed in an invasion of the Continent. In McNaughton's famous phrase, the "Canadian Army, as a whole, was a dagger pointed at the heart of Berlin."(3) But McNaughton's powerful words could not disguise the fact that the Canadians had been sitting in England for a long time and it was beginning to look as though they would never see any action.

In December 1940, the Defence Department had pressed for Canadian involvement in the Middle East, which, as we have seen, King opposed. By April 1941, Ralston was complaining that the Corp's inactivity was hurting recruitment in Canada, but King was not about to commit troops to action for action's sake.(4) In August, 1941, General Crerar wrote to McNaughton on the subject.

As you, of course, realize the Canadian Army is more vulnerable to political attack than the other two services for the simple reason that owing to factors which none of us can

(1) Ibid.

(2) Swettenham, Vol. 2, p.117.

(3) Spry Interview, 16 May 1985.

(4) See Chapter Two.

control the Canadian Corps has been tied down to a passive defensive role in the United Kingdom and has thus been unable to satisfy the public in its demands for sensational action.(1)

The Corp's inactivity had begun to have serious political and military repercussions.

Mackenzie King responded to the political pressure for action by telling McNaughton and General P.J. Montague (Senior Combatant Officer, C.M.H.Q.) that "we were prepared to have our troops serve in any theatre of war", (2) a point which Ralston reiterated in October of that year.(3) McNaughton kept the Canadians busy by preparing them for the invasion, but as Crerar was told in the summer of 1941:

[i]t is becoming increasingly difficult to get the men in the ranks to really take an interest in these training exercises; there is a great deal of scepticism about the possibility of invasion. It is perhaps the old story of 'Wolf, Wolf'! One hears from all directions the wish that we could really have some prospect of action...Commanders feel that what lethargy there is would disappear at once.(4)

By May 1942, C.M.H.Q. had published a booklet on morale, which said:

[i]n the light of the circumstances of

(1) PAC, Crerar Papers, Vol. 1, 958C.009(D12), Crerar to McNaughton, 11 August 1941.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 21 August 1941.

(3) PAC, Crerar Papers, Vol. 15, 958C.009 (D269), War Diary, 20 October 1941.

(4) Ibid. Vol. 19, 958C.009 (D333), E.L.M. Burns to Crerar, 16 July 1941.

Canadians remaining in England, it is very important to assure the men that their contribution is not only necessary but recognised through the Empire... A good many of the men feel that Canadians may have lost their prestige by their inaction.(1)

Given the political and military pressure for action, there can be very little doubt that Canadians accepted the invitation to participate in Dieppe because no "Canadian general [could] have refused to commit his men to battle when so much of the country's leadership, media and public had been pressing to see Canadians in action".(2) The question which remains a subject of debate is whether or not the Canadians actively campaigned for inclusion in the operation.

Given the heat of the pressure from Ralston, Crerar and later King, it would be surprising if Canadians had not been included. Stacey writes that when Montgomery approached McNaughton on 30 April, he "had been pressed to agree to a composite British and Canadian force...General Crerar (GOC, 1st Canadian Corps which was under Montgomery's operational command) had already been approached and had nominated the 2nd Canadian Division for the operation."(3) Why had Crerar been approached before McNaughton? It seems that a Canadian did know about the

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 65, English Trip, Morale, C.M.H.Q. 1942, "Canadian Army Overseas, MORALE, 1 May 1942".

(2) W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous, Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 120.

(3) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 329.

raid before 25 April and that he had specifically requested that Canadians take part. A series of correspondence exists which is useful in shedding light on this matter.

In 1969, General G.G. Simonds wrote to Mountbatten about Dieppe.

From my own personal knowledge, Crerar had a very great deal to do with the inception [this emphasis] of Dieppe and that it should be a predominantly Canadian operation...As I have no documentary knowledge to hand, I would very much value any information you can bring to light, particularly on the inception of the raid as originally planned and its later revival as "JUBILEE". (1)

Simonds went on to say that Crerar had relinquished his post as CGS and come back to Britain as Acting Corps Commander "obsessed with the idea that Canadian troops in England had to be got into operations - any operation." At a meeting on 24 March between Crerar, Simonds and Mountbatten, "Dieppe was specifically mentioned and Crerar urged that it should be undertaken by Canadian troops". Because a specific objective had been discussed, Mountbatten had made "it a condition that no record

(1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Vice-Admiral J. Hughes-Hallett Papers, MG30 E463, Lt.-General G.G. Simonds to Lord Louis Mountbatten, 22 January 1969.

should be kept of the meeting." (1)

In Mountbatten's reply to Simonds, he said "I agree with every word that you have written...You may certainly use my name...also that of Jack Hughes-Hallett." He went on to say that he had not wanted to use Canadian troops at all.

My original idea was to use the Commando Brigade and the Royal Marine Division as the land troops....Brookie [General Alan Brooke] spoke to me personally about the desire of the Canadians to be brought into a raiding operation as soon as possible. My recollection is that I protested strongly because it was such a large-scale and uncertain operation...Furthermore, I was anxious to use troops that had amphibious experience... I therefore protested that this was the very last operation in which untried and inexperienced Canadian troops

(1) Ibid. Stacey writes that the first meeting to consider a definite plan for Dieppe was 3 April. He does not say when Dieppe was first mentioned. He does say, though, that the documentation of the origins and objects of the raid "is far from complete. In these matters the historian is obliged to rely to a considerable extent upon the memories and the verbal evidence of informed persons. The fact that "security" was of such great importance militated against complete records being kept." Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 326. Simonds' recollection seems plausible since Mountbatten, at his first C.O.H.Q. meeting, was considering a raid on Cherbourg. Terence Robertson, The Shame and The Glory: Dieppe (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1962) p. 111. This indicates nothing more than that a raid - somewhere - was under consideration. It does not seem too unlikely that Dieppe could have been mentioned to Crerar about 24 March.

should be used.(1)

Mountbatten recalled that General Brooke had said that "Crerar was absolutely adamant that [Canadians] should be used." (2) On 28 April, Crerar was called to Montgomery's headquarters and was told that the raid on Dieppe was his. "For reasons of military protocol they decided to say no more of the project until a request for Canadian troops had been formally made to General McNaughton". (3) This account seems to fit in well with what Montgomery later told McNaughton about being 'pressed' to use Canadian troops. Crerar was told of the raid before McNaughton because Crerar had been the one who had actively campaigned for

(1) PAC, Hughes-Hallett Papers, Mountbatten to Simonds, 4 February 1969. Mountbatten's views have to take into account his biographer's opinion that with "the possible exception of the partition of India, no episode in Mountbatten's career has earned him as much harsh criticism as the raid on Dieppe. It is the only point on which he showed himself invariably on the defensive." Philip Ziegler, Mountbatten: The Official Biography (London: William Collins and Sons, Co., 1985) p. 186. Ziegler does confirm Mountbatten's reluctance to use the inexperienced Canadians, however (p. 189).

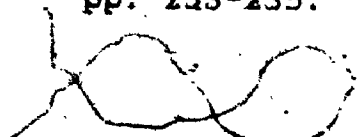
(2) Ibid. This is corroborated by both Stacey and Robertson. "On taking command of the Corps at the end of 1941, General Crerar was very anxious for raiding operations for his troops. In February 1942, he wrote to Montgomery on the matter, and in March, he talked with General Brooke and Mountbatten." Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 308. See also Robertson, pp. 39-40.

(3) Robertson, p. 56.

Canada's involvement.(1)

The point of all this is to suggest that the reasons Canadians went to Dieppe involved more than just the unwillingness of Canadian commanders to reject the opportunity. The troops' inactivity had begun to cause political problems, hence Ralston's, Crerar's and eventually King's efforts to get

(1) This correspondence between Simonds and Mountbatten was shown to C.P. Stacey in 1969. Stacey did not use it because he felt that Simonds' "hatred" for Crerar (who had appointed General Foulkes and not Simonds as CGS in 1945) had obscured his judgement in the matter. Simonds does seem to have wanted to indict Crerar for poor military judgement, but beyond the acrimony, these recollections (most of which Stacey corroborates) seem to give fairly sound evidence that Crerar pushed very hard for Canadian participation. Motives can be impossible to identify (and perhaps Stacey's own allegiance to Crerar might be considered here) but this evidence, corroborated by two authorities on the subject, and by Mountbatten and Hughes-Hallett, seems too compelling to ignore. For more on Stacey's views, see A Date With History, pp. 233-235.



them into action.(1) By responding to political pressures, inexperienced troops were committed to a badly conceived, but gallantly executed, raid. As Douglas and Greenhous said, "...the army should never have accepted an invitation to send its untested troops into such a potential killing ground."(2)

What of the question of operational control? In the initial negotiations over the raid between the Canadians and the British, it appeared as though the British were in complete control, in

(1) The points of view of two men who were there at the time are interesting. General Spry did not feel there was a morale problem until the 5th Armoured Division arrived in Italy in 1943. Then, the other Canadians there realized they were there for more than an 'in and out' operation. Spry Interview, 16 May 1985. A similar view was expressed by Brigadier-General W.D. Whitaker. "I can't remember the morale being bad. I can't remember a lot of crime or a lot of guys going AWOL. I think morale was pretty good all the way through, except in the fall of 1944 when we realized the government didn't give a damn about us. Before then, the men were enthusiastic. They may not have liked the 25 mile marches, but who does? We were too busy chasing the broads who were around there! I doubt the criticisms in Canada were shared by the troops in England. It's alright for the press to criticize the fact that we hadn't seen much action - they weren't about to get shot at. I sure wasn't pushing my neck out and saying I wanted to get shot at. If you are given a job to do, you go do it, but you can't expect that anybody (and I'm speaking about the lower ranks) really wanted to get involved in Dieppe." Interview, Brigadier-General W.D. Whitaker, DSO and Bar. ED. CD. 1 June 1985, Oakville, Ontario. General Whitaker was mobilized as a lieutenant with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry in 1939. He fought at Dieppe, and in 1944 was part of the push through France. In the fall of 1944 he saw action in the Scheldt and in 1945 won his second DSO during the Rhineland campaign. He was promoted Brigadier in 1945.

(2) Douglas and Greenhous, p. 120. See also Stacey, Six Years of War, pp. 397-398; John Mellor, Forgotten Heroes: The Canadians at Dieppe (Toronto: Methuen, 1975) and Ronald Atkin, Dieppe 1942: (Toronto: Gage Publishing Company, 1980).

spite of Canada's commitment of one division. McNaughton was not given a copy of the outline plan for the operation when Montgomery broached the subject to him on 30 April. On 5 May, McNaughton suggested that:

in future Combined Operations involving Canadian Troops, the outline plan should be placed before me before submission to the Chiefs of Staff Committee and that the Chiefs of Staff Paper should show that in giving their approval they take note of my acceptance; also that I should be included in the distribution list.(1)

There were also problems over the chain of command. Lieutenant-General J. Swayne (CGS, British Home Forces Command) had written to McNaughton, noting that Montgomery, as GOC, would give the Canadian Corps and the 2nd Division "such information as they require." McNaughton replied in less vague terms, defining the chain of command as GHQ Home Forces - SECO - 1 Canadian Corps - 2nd Canadian Division. This was accepted on the basis that militarily, planning and responsibility for execution of an operation are inseparable.(2) Then there was the matter of the chain of command for the operation itself.

On 3 July 1942, McNaughton wrote to General Bernard Paget (C-in-C Home Forces) that:

having regard to the particular Canadian responsibility in this matter and to maintain the proper channel of command for the Canadian units involved, Lt.-General Crerar, Commander 1 Canadian Corps, should be with

(1) Stacey. Six Years of War, p. 333.

(2) Robertson, pp.61-62 and PAC, Hughes-Hallett Papers, Simonds to Mountbatten, 22 January, 1969.

the group of Senior Officers of the three services at Fighter Group who appear to be charged with the exercise of command of this operation.(1)

On 4 July, General Swayne replied:

[a]ctually there is no room for any more at the Group Headquarters and it was agreed with Leigh-Mallory [Vice-Air Marshal] that the only people there should be Montgomery and Mountbatten, but apart from this, the C-in-C considers that it would be wrong for Harry Crerar to go there[.] There can only be one man in command of the operation and Montgomery will see to it that he keeps Harry Crerar in hourly touch with the situation.(2)

As Crerar told Montgomery the same day, "I would be less than frank if I did not tell him that he was quite wrong in regarding this issue as a simple and narrow military problem. Indeed, if this attitude was maintained I was quite certain that the issue would be raised to the highest political levels."(3) Montgomery gave in and asked McNaughton to headquarters for the operation. Crerar was 'invited' as well.(4)

McNaughton had won the right to be on hand for the operation but his struggle to do so was indicative of the attitude the British had to the Canadian's right of reference to their government - rather than to the War Office - for operations.

(1) PAC, Crerar Papers, Vol. 2, 958.009 (D21) McNaughton to Paget, 3 July 1942.

(2) Ibid. Swayne to McNaughton, 4 July 1942.

(3) Ibid. Memorandum of a conversation, Crerar and Montgomery, 4 July 1942.

(4) Ibid.

Quite simply, this right was rarely acknowledged. As one of McNaughton's P.A.'s recalled, the Visiting Forces Act:

was quite beyond the British comprehension - that we had our own government - our own control. They could never really understand that McNaughton had practically an open line to Mackenzie King. He didn't have to go through the British War Office or the C-in-C Home Forces like Paget... After all, "you're part of the British Commonwealth old chap, you take your orders from us, the Mother Country. Not so by law.(1)

McNaughton's determination to entrench his government's right of control made for abrasive relations with the British High Command. Some, like General Ironside (C.I.G.S. to May 1940) were willing to learn the intricacies of the Canadian forces' legal relationship with the British.(2) Others, like Generals Brooke and Montgomery, were not so helpful. "Victor", a command and signals exercise held in January 1941 was one of many examples of the disregard for Canada's autonomy. Portions of the 1st Division had been taken arbitrarily from Canadian command and placed under British formations. McNaughton went directly to Brooke to protest, but only reluctantly did Brooke agree a mistake had been made.(3) The solution was simple enough, but

(1) Spry Interview, 16 May 1985. General Whitaker confirms this view. "Canadians were still colonials and we resented that very deeply. But that was certainly the attitude there. We expected it. The Statute of Westminster didn't do anything to change the British. That was why the Canadians kept insisting that the final authority rested with Ottawa." Interview, W.D. Whitaker, 2 March 1985, Oakville, Ontario.

(2) Swettenham, Vol. 2, pp 31-33.

(3) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, pp. 215-216; Swettenham, Vol. 2, pp. 164-167.

the principle of the matter continued to rankle the British Generals. General Montgomery later commented that General Simonds (Acting Army Commander, October 1944) was a good commander because he was not "influenced by national [Canadian] ideas." His one idea was to beat the Germans.(1) The negotiations between the Canadian and British High Commands before Dieppe were significant of the great problem endemic to McNaughton's command: McNaughton had Mackenzie King's approval for his stand on the constitutional matter(2) but his numerous attempts to secure his force's autonomy became a source of contention between the GOC and the British.

As well as illustrating both the Canadians' problem of control in operations, and the political pressure which led to the 2nd Division's involvement in Dieppe, the raid had one other significant effect. The 68% casualty rate(3) provoked severe criticisms in Canada. In spite of the report to the War Committee on 26 August 1942 that "the Canadian Army Commander and the Canadian and British Staffs were well satisfied that the operation had been well worthwhile and that the price paid had not been disproportionate,(4) "Canadian citizens, particularly

(1) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 224.

(2) PAC, King Diary, 28 August 1941.

(3) PAC, RG24, Vol. 12,468, 6/Dieppe/1, Calculations made on the figures of the Dieppe Operation as of 1 January 1943.

(4) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. X, C4874, 26 August 1942.

those who had lost relatives, saw only the casualty lists and the failure. It was quite impossible, without helping the enemy, to make any announcement of the actual lessons learned." (1) In September, King reflected that he could not help feeling that it would have been better had all the forces been kept intact until the moment when it was absolutely advisable to attempt invasion. I question if the information gained could begin to equal the heavy losses...It is a very serious blow to the Canadian Forces.

Letters from Canadian Prisoners of War noted that the raid had completely lacked the element of surprise. "Under those circumstances, it looks as though the raid was a hopeless task from the outset." (3) The controversy spread to the House of Commons. In February 1943, an urgent message from Defense (Ottawa) to Canmilitary (London) requested the "latest information and conclusions resulting from studies of Dieppe. Both opposition leaders here have left impression of almost impossible conditions and Coldwell [leader of the C.C.F.] has called for a

(1) C.F. Stacey, The Canadian Army, 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1948) p.83.

(2) PAC, King Diary 19 September 1942. Ralston did not appear to be critical. In a letter to his son Stuart, he discussed the Canadians' exemplary efforts and the value of the lessons learned. PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 4, Correspondence, J.L. Ralston to son Stuart, Ralston to Stuart, 20 September 1942.

(3) Ibid. Vol. 53, Dieppe Raid General, Memorandum on Letters from Prisoners of War in Germany as to Dieppe Raid, P.O.W. Section, Department of External Affairs to Minister, 7 December 1942. The report also noted criticisms of the air support.

by House."(1) In these circumstances it was impossible for McNaughton's reputation to remain unscathed. Furthermore, McNaughton had clearly lost control of events for a crucial period, when Crerar was in command. McNaughton was partially undermined by his own organization, since he could not have vetoed the raid without reducing Crerar's credibility. The raid may not have appeared questionable to McNaughton before its execution, but the criticisms afterwards did "something to undermine the hitherto unassailable prestige of General McNaughton with the public."(2)

A few months later, another incident occurred which severely damaged McNaughton's reputation as a commander. Exercise "Spartan", conducted in March 1943, became the lever which was used to pry the GOC from his command. There is considerable controversy as to whether "Spartan" had been a fair test of McNaughton's generalship, but the fact remains that fair or not, it proved to be his undoing. After Spartan, McNaughton - and his army - became highly vulnerable to attack from the same political sources he had tried so hard to neutralize. Examining McNaughton's role in Spartan, and its critical aftermath, will help to explain his loss of credibility with the Canadian government and the British High Command. It will also show that in spite of Canada's right to control her armed forces, British

(1) Ibid. Defensor to Canmilitary, 2 February 1943, CGS. 86.

(2) Stacey, The Canadian Army, 1939-1945, p. 83; Douglas and Greenhouse, p. 120; Swettenham, Vol. 2, pp. 249-250.

influence over appointments carried significant weight during the war.

In the invasion of Europe, it was assumed that the Canadian's role would be to exploit a bridgehead established by another army. (1) Spartan had been designed as a training manoeuvre for this projected role. From McNaughton's point of view, "Spartan" was to be a "strict test of the physical condition and endurance of the troops, their proficiency in movement and tactics and of the ability of commanders and staffs to administer, handle and fight their formations and units." (2) But, as Stacey notes, "a poor performance by an Army or Corps in such manoeuvres was likely to count heavily against its commander in the opinion of GHQ Home Forces and the War Office." (3) From the beginning, it seems, there were two purposes to the exercise. For McNaughton, "Spartan" was to be a valuable training opportunity. For the British, it would test McNaughton's capabilities as a field commander.

In the exercise, the 'German Army' (Lt.-General J.A.H. Gammel's VIII and XI British Corps) was in defence of 'Eastland' (Eastern England) with a stronghold at Eastland's capital,

(1) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 249, War Diary, 1/1/43 - 31/1/43, Appx. M, Minutes of a Conference Held at H.Q. 1st Canadian Army, 10 January 1943.

(2) PAC, RG24, Vol. 9793, 2/Ex Spartan/1/2, McNaughton to Stuart for the Particular Information of the Minister, 13 March 1943.

(3) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 249.

'Huntingdon'. 'Westland' (Western England) was neutral territory. The 'Second Army' (Crerar's 1st Corps and Sansom's 2nd Corps and the XII British Corps) under McNaughton was to seize Huntingdon by breaking out of the bridgehead established on the 'Continent' (England's Southern coast). Operations were to be directed between the 'fortress' of London and the Westland frontier. A third objective was the seizure and development of airfields.(1)

McNaughton's plan of attack differed from the course expected of him by General Paget (C-in-C Home Forces and exercise director). The attack depended upon speed for its success, and Paget considered the Second Army should move along the open terrain near Westland, then wheel around to Huntingdon, "thereby avoiding a direct assault across a serious obstacle [the Thames River]." (2) McNaughton had decided on an alternative course; a direct advance on Huntingdon across the Thames. (3) 1st Corps would establish the bridgehead at the Thames, 2nd Corps would cover its western flank and XII Corps would protect its eastern

(1) PAC, RG24, Vol. 9793, 2/Ex Spartan/1/2, GHQ Exercise "Spartan", Narrative of Events, March 1943. On 20 February, GHQ told McNaughton to direct an attack on Eastland on 5 March. On 2 March, Second Army issued a warning order to 1st and 2nd Corps and by the next day, McNaughton's troops were positioned on the bridgehead.

(2) Ibid. GHQ Exercise "Spartan", Comments by C-in-C Home Forces, March 1943.

(3) Ibid.

flank.(1) McNaughton's plan would probably have been acceptable had he been using experienced troops, but this was only the Canadian Army's first opportunity at such a large-scale operation, while the 2nd Corps was a brand new formation with incomplete signals and transport equipment. McNaughton had included Sanson's Corps in the order of battle so that it could have a unique training experience.(2) That decision was to have serious consequences for McNaughton.

"Spartan" began with a surprise. "In order to test the flexibility of the opposing plans, both Force Commanders were confronted with unexpected situations at the start of the operations."(3) McNaughton was told that the German army had advanced into Southland a day earlier than had been expected. On 4 March, McNaughton was ordered to move. The Germans had had the time advantage to proceed with their demolitions and the Second Army had to resolve the confusion of its earlier start. McNaughton dealt with this latter difficulty (called by Paget "a most credible effort")(4) but he was slow to appreciate "the probable result of demolitions which the army might be expected to carry out in the changed circumstances."(5) McNaughton's

(1) Ibid. Narrative of Events.

(2) Stacey, Six Years of War, p. 249.

(3) PAC, RG24, Vol. 9793, 2/Ex Spartan/1/2, GHQ Exercise "Spartan", Comments by C-in-C Home Forces, March 1943.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid.

plan, Paget continued, did not anticipate serious opposition by the Germans until the Eastland frontier had been crossed. This, he said, was a poor assumption to make since the Germans' reaction to "Allied moves [had] generally been energetic and violent." (1)

Crerar's Corps advanced rapidly and by 5 March had smashed the hinge of Gammel's pivot of defence. After that, McNaughton had the initiative, but he was unable to exploit this. (2) 2 Corps could not move until 7 March, after which its advance was very slow. Its armoured formations were used improperly (3) and its communications between Corps and Army Headquarters broke down completely. By the time Second Army had begun to recover from the effect of 2 Corps' problems, the cease-fire was signalled. (4)

Paget had numerous criticisms of the exercise, not the least of which concerned 2 Corps' "slow advance and tactical and administrative mistakes in its handling." (5) McNaughton had been

(1) Ibid.

(2) Swettenham, Vol. 2, p. 277.

(3) The two opposing armoured corps were 50 miles apart from each other and were unable to influence the operation. During the entire exercise, armour was only used three times. Since the armoured forces' speed and direct fire was essential to the operation's success, this result earned severe criticism from Paget. PAC, RG24, 9793, 2/Ex Spartan/1/2, GHQ Exercise "Spartan" Comment by C-in-C Home Forces, March 1943.

(4) Stacey, SIX YEARS OF WAR, pp. 250-251.

(5) PAC, RG24, Vol. 9793, 2/Ex Spartan/1/2, GHQ Exercise "Spartan", Comments by C-in-C Home Forces, March 1943.

too involved in the "minute to minute details of the battle." Frequent changes of plan had caused confusion, prevented rest for the troops, diminished confidence in the commander and caused night moves over unreconnoitred routes. (1) McNaughton had gone to Sanson's headquarters on 11 March, causing confusion there. Paget also criticized McNaughton's solution to the bridging problem presented by the exercise, saying it had been accomplished by an arbitrary allotment of bridges. 60 were built and only one half of these were used. Given 2 Corps' inexperience, the exercise could not have gone smoothly.

McNaughton was pleased with the results of the exercise. As he told General Stuart:

Our Army Staff was new and partly set up ad hoc. Nevertheless by the conclusion of the Exercise it was working smoothly and efficiently... We can feel that the progress of the Exercise reflected what might really have happened in battle... Our plan of organization has been proved to be sound and... the existing War Establishments of units will require little further change. (2)

The British were not so pleased, however, and, as we shall see, "Spartan" gave them considerable ammunition to persuade Ralston and Stuart that McNaughton could not continue as army commander.

Years later, Stacey commented:

[t]he most serious error General McNaughton

(1) On 6 March, 2334 hours, 2 Corps was ordered to advance east across 1 Corps' line of communication. McNaughton abandoned this plan at 1615 hours on 7 March and order the Corps to move to the west. Ibid.

(2) Ibid. McNaughton to Stuart for the Particular Information of the Minister, 13 March 1943.

made...was in committing to it at all the green 2nd Canadian Corps Headquarters...and its incompletely trained and equipped signals organization. Andy, I think, was looking at the affair from the point of view of its training value; a very secure person, I doubt whether he ever considered the possibility that a poor performance by the army might reflect on himself. But it certainly did. The good performance of the 1st Corps, on the other hand, doubtless enhanced the reputation of its commander, Harry Crerar.(1)

General Spry confirms this view:

I don't suppose it ever occurred to McNaughton that he was being tested in the eyes of the British. After all, he was more concerned about exercising his own troops and training them and developing their skills. The only way to develop those skills is to make an absolute hash of it...Spartan was an unfair test, but I think that the British were absolutely delighted to find an excuse like that to put the pressure on the Canadian government and say that we want a new commander - hoping that it would be a British commander put in to command the colonials.(2)

There may be some substance to these comments(3) but McNaughton - and not just the 2nd Corps - had made mistakes. McNaughton's role as commander had had to involve a good deal of diplomatic responsibilities and political problems, but the military aspect of his command - strategy and tactics - was still important for

(1) Stacey, A Dare With History, p. 126.

(2) Spry Interview, 16 May 1985.

(3) When the time came to choose McNaughton's successor, the V.C.I.G.S. (General Nye) suggested that "questions of nationalism have to give way when lives and security of our men are affected." PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 52, McNaughton Resignation, Alternative Courses as to Appointment of Army Commander, 12 December 1943. Neither Paget nor Brooke seemed to have made this sort of observation.

exercises.(1)

The matter of McNaughton's command capabilities had to wait, however, until the Canadian authorities had solved a more pressing problem. By early 1943 the press had stepped up the momentum of its attack on the army's inactivity. An editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press had been particularly outspoken.

[T]he decision to use the Canadian Army in action only as a unit, complete with its two corps and all ancillary troops, is one which ill-suits the needs of 1943...There was in 1939 good reason to support the idea...Every Canadian knows how powerful the Canadian Corps proved to be from 1916 to 1918...Can it be that the 1939 decision has immobilized our army? If so, upon whom does the responsibility for not modifying that decision rest? Does the pride of our Commanders...play a part in the maintenance of a policy of continued training while the armies of other nations learn their trade in battle? We do not know, but it is certain that disquiet is rising, and the government should remember that the hand which holds the poised dagger can become palsied through lack

(1) Whitaker Interview, 1 June 1985. There is a curious protectionism in some Canadians' responses to McNaughton's performance in Spartan. Stacey does not put much emphasis on any of Paget's comments and even McNaughton did not seem very worried about his troops' performance. General Pope's diary contains a peculiar reference to Spartan. "Pearson...referred to the "Spartan" report and asked me if I had seen it. I said "yes". He went on to say that no one outside of Canada had seen the report, none having been sent from England. There were rumours, which promised to grow in strength, that the report damned McNaughton to a considerable extent... Pearson observed, and I entirely agree with him, that it is up to us in justice to McNaughton to take such steps as may be necessary to prevent really adverse and unjust criticism drifting back to Canada from the United Kingdom. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Major-General M.A. Pope Papers, MG27, 111F4, Vol. 1 (Diary), 16 June 1943. Could Canadians have been worrying that criticism of McNaughton might create a political problem in Canada?

of use.(1)

The pressure for action which had begun before Dieppe was mounting. McNaughton stood by his view, expressed in 1941, that "the best service which the Canadian Corps [could] render [was] in the United Kingdom until, as a Corps, it could be used abroad."(2) Ottawa, however, seemed only able to see the problems the Canadians' static role was causing in Canada. In October 1942, General Stuart had written to Ralston on the subject and had asked the Minister whether it was "advisable, from the point of view of Canadian self-respect and morale both military and national to have the Canadian Army kept together on the United Kingdom job for another long year?"(3) Stuart noted that all the advantages to keeping the army in Britain were "military, whereas the disadvantages are non-military, except the possible deterioration of the morale of the army itself." In order to make an effective contribution to the war, Stuart believed "it may be necessary to employ the Canadian Army in whole, or, in part, in any theatre of war."(4)

There had been an operation in the offing in November 1942.

(1) Winnipeg Free Press, 18 February 1943.

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 40, C.M.H.Q. Items Discussed, Minutes of a Conference with the Minister of National Defence at C.M.H.Q. 15 October 1941. N.B. This view was shared by the British.

(3) Ibid. Vol. 51, McNaughton File, Stuart to Ralston, 6 October 1942.

(4) Ibid.

When Ralston had been in London in October 1942, he had asked whether Canadians could be used in "Torch" (the invasion of North Africa) but he was told it was too late to change plans. On 5 October, Ralston had been told that Churchill had understood that "McNaughton did not fancy taking troops out for "Torch" ."(1) General Brooke confirmed this the next day.(2) Ralston could do nothing about "Torch" but he did go back to Ottawa with the idea that the Canadians might be used in Sicily (Operation "Husky", 10 July 1943). He told the War Committee that the "objectives were limited and it was understood that the force would return to the

(1) Ibid. Vol. 64, English Trip 1942, Lunch with Churchill, Ralston, Stuart, Howe and Auchinleck, 5 October 1942. N.B. Ralston's secretary mistakenly transcribed "men" for "McN."

(2) Ibid. 6 October 1942. Crerar later told Ralston that he had heard from Sir James Griggs (Secretary of State for War) that McNaughton, "when asked about participation in "Torch"[,] had indicated that the Canadian government wanted the army kept together." Ibid. Vol. 59, Diary and Notes, Overseas Trip 1943, Crerar and Ralston, 30 November 1943 (Messina).

Canadian Army on completion of its task."(1) Sicily did not, however, recommend itself to McNaughton, who continually opposed any ideas to disperse his army. As the War Committee was told, "General McNaughton did not recommend that we should push for employment of the army merely to satisfy a desire for activity or for representation in particular theatres, however desirable that might be from the Canadian point of view."(2) It appeared that McNaughton was alone among the key Canadian players in this regard.

McNaughton gave in, however, as King, Ralston and Stuart had pressed the British very hard for involvement in "Husky".(3) In a conversation with General Brooke on 23 April 1943, McNaughton was told:

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. XI, C4874, 21 October 1942. This plan was almost aborted early in 1943, due to problems in shipping the required Canadian troops to England. After the Casablanca Conference, priority was given to shipping American groundcrews overseas for bombing operations in Germany. For two weeks, King and Churchill argued the matter, and eventually, Churchill agreed to the original shipping allocation for Canada. Neither Massey nor McNaughton had been given any information on the changes. Stuart felt that "Spartan is probably the reason why you were not kept informed by Nye." [Brooke, with whom McNaughton had an informal but effective line of communication, was away at the time]. PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 51, McNaughton File, Stuart to McNaughton, 31 March 1943, C.G.S. 196, and McNaughton to Stuart, 20 March 1943, G.S. 598. For the Prime Minister to Prime Minister correspondence on the shipping, see PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. XII, C4874, 11, 17, 23 and 25 March 1943.

(2) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. XII, C4875, 23 March 1943.

(3) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 51, McNaughton File, King to Churchill, 17 March 1943, No. 47 and 20 March 1943, No. 60.

that the chance of an operation based on the U.K. against the Continent of Europe during 1943 was now very small and that in view of the insistent requests made by the Minister of National Defence and C.I.G.S. Canada, the Prime Minister had given him a directive that Cdn. participation in the next operation was to be arranged...It was noted that the C.I.G.S. had said that he was requesting the participation of Cdn. troops "at great inconvenience to the British Army...(1)

McNaughton replied that Canadian formations should not take part in any action "for action's sake. He did not want to disperse the army, but this might have to be accepted." (2) On 25 April, McNaughton was asked to give a definite answer on Canadian participation in the operation, and he raised the V.C.I.G.S.'s ire by asserting his right of reference to the Canadian government. (3) McNaughton approved the operation but later commented that "public opinion in Canada was being incited to demand action. This continued propaganda in the press would disquiet people as to whether or not we were making a proper contribution." (4) "The war did not seem to require the Canadian presence in Sicily. The British certainly did not think it did,

(1) PAC; McNaughton Papers, Vol. 249, War Diary, 1/4/43-30/4/43, Appx. PP. Memorandum of a Discussion, McNaughton and General Sir Alan Brooke, 23 April 1943.

(2) Ibid.

(3) General Nye "said he appreciated the position...but that it was a matter of great urgency and stressed the necessity for an immediate decision." Ibid. Appx. AAA, Discussion held at the War Office and Norfolk House, 25 April 1943.

(4) Ibid. Appx., GGG, Memorandum of a Discussion between McNaughton and Lt.-General Ismay at War Cabinet Office, 27 April 1943.

and neither did McNaughton. Editorial opinion in Canada was critical of the Canadian Army's inactivity, and it threatened to incite further criticisms from Canadians if the Army did not join the "Husky" operation. As a result, King, Ralston and Stuart had imposed their political will on the military situation. The only saving grace, as far as McNaughton was concerned, was that the 1st Canadian Division and the 1st Army Tank Brigade would re-join the rest of the army in England, once "Husky" was finished.

Given the priority McNaughton had placed on a balanced Canadian Army concentrated in England until it could take part in the invasion of Europe, the insistence on Canadian involvement in Sicily must have been particularly difficult for him to accept. He told Stuart in May 1943 that "as far as the Cdn. Army is concerned, the departure of 1 Cdn. Div. etc. leaves our army out of balance and so considerable re-planning will be necessary unless we can count on the return of these troops before serious operations commence or their replacement from British sources." (1) The situation became more complex for McNaughton when he heard a rumour from the War Office that they were thinking of asking for a Canadian division for North Africa. (2) "This request," McNaughton said, "...will end the conception on which we have been proceeding, namely that Canada's contribution

(1) Ibid. War Diary, 1/5/43 - 31/5/43, Appx. N, McNaughton to Stuart, 6 May 1943.

(2) Swettenham, Vol. 2, p. 293.

to the war could best be through her own army." (1) Stuart's reply was unsympathetic: "It would appear that there is not much likelihood of the Canadian Army as a whole being employed in 1943. I cannot see that the employment of approximately one corps in Africa this year would necessarily prevent the employment of the army as a whole in 1944." (2) Employment had a major political priority, however, and McNaughton's arguments were unequal to the talk of refocussing the government's attention.

An editorial in the Globe and Mail illustrates the gathering strength of the push for the dispersion of the army.

Now that the North African campaign is finished, and a new phases of the war is opening up, the honest course would be to admit frankly, even at the expense of personal pride, that the creation of a cumbrous military establishment overseas was an error of judgement and to permit the untutilization of Canadian divisions in any formation where they can be effectively employed. (3)

At the end of July, Ralston and Stuart suggested to McNaughton that the Canadian forces in Italy be brought up to Corps strength. This, they believed, would give the Corps Headquarters experience, as well as extending battle experience to more troops. In addition, the morale of the Canadian Army and that of

(1) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 249, War Diary, 1/5/43 - 31/5/43, McNaughton to Stuart, G.S. 1022, 6 May 1943.

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 51, McNaughton File, Stuart to McNaughton, 8 May 1943.

(3) Globe and Mail, 14 May 1943.

the public at home had been suffering, and action would elevate it considerably. They told McNaughton that they realized their idea might mean the abandonment of the First Canadian Army set up. McNaughton commented that the "cause was bigger than the man." (1) McNaughton noted that he would support the idea on "the assumption that the Canadian force would return to England if a decisive attack on Germany were to be launched from there." (2)

Although McNaughton had seemed mildly disposed to the Ralston-Stuart proposal initially, an argument of some considerable heat ensued as the week progressed. On 2 August, McNaughton suggested that General Brooke had been impatient of assertions of Canadian autonomy and told Ralston and Stuart that "someone may want to see Canadian Army set up eliminated." (3) McNaughton worried that the Mediterranean might turn out to be nothing more than "garrison duty". The next day, General Brooke told Ralston and Stuart that he would approve the build up to

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 59, Notes and Diary for Overseas Trip 1943, 29 July, 1943.

(2) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 182, PA-5-3-10 Vol. 2. This depended, in McNaughton's view, on whose view of the war prevailed. The Americans were pushing for decisive operations using the United Kingdom as an active base. If this strategy carried, the Mediterranean Theatre would become a "minimum garrison" and McNaughton would not support his army's dispersion. The British preferred a strategy of concentration in the Mediterranean, which, it was hoped, would contain German strength in that theatre and allow for an attack on Germany through the soft under belly of the Balkans. Ibid.

(3) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 59, Diary and Notes for Overseas Trip, 1943, 2 August, 1943.

corps strength.(1) Once McNaughton heard this, he became adamantly opposed to the plan. Ralston's conversation with Brooke, he said, "however unintentionally he had intended [it], would play into the hands of individuals, possibly now including Brooke himself, who desired the break-up of the Cdn. army, so as to use our troops as individual formations to buttress their own formations.(2) The debate became heated.

The Minister spoke of a "voice at the Peace Table" proportional to battle contribution, and I said "armies in being was a more real measure of the weight attached to the voice of any country...I said that as a matter of principle I was opposed to the dispersion of the Canadian Army...I wanted Canada both for the war contribution it would mean and for after the war, to end up with her army under her own control.(3)

McNaughton ended the discussion by trying to extract a promise that the Canadian force would be re-united in England for the invasion. "He was told that matter had to be dealt with one step at a time."(4)

Ralston was called to Ottawa for the Quebec Conference and the acrimonious debate subsided temporarily. But Ralston eventually recommended to the War Committee that "additional

(1) Ibid. "Summary of Conversations". 3 August.

(2) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 182, PA-5-3-1, Vol. 2, Memorandum of discussion, McNaughton, Ralston and Stuart, 5 August 1943 (dated 9 August).

(3) Ibid.

(4) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 59, Diary and Notes for Overseas Trip 1943, Summary of Conversations, 5 August 1943.

Canadian formations should be given an opportunity of participating in the Mediterranean area, possibly with the establishment of a Canadian Corps Headquarters there." (1) Then, the die was cast. The War Committee began to push for British acceptance of the proposal. On 12 October, the C.I.G.S. notified the Canadian government of Churchill's decision to replace the 1st British Corps with a Canadian Corps (1st Corps under Crerar and the Fifth Armoured Division) and he asked for an early decision. As General Brooke told McNaughton on 7 October, the Canadian's proposal had been rejected before because of an "inability to provide shipping, but that he had had the proposition re-examined on the basis of an inter-change of personnel only." (2) At the War Committee, Ralston reviewed the negotiations with McNaughton on the subject.

At first, General McNaughton had expressed himself as favouring such a move and an approach to the U.K. authorities in this sense had been made. Subsequently, however, General McNaughton had returned to the opposite opinion, basing himself on the big importance of keeping the Canadian Army together and notwithstanding considerations of battle training and of morale. There was no doubt that General McNaughton remained of this latter view, though it was apparent that he would accept and implement a contrary decision. (3)

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. XIII, 11 August 1943.

(2) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 250, War Diary, 1/10/43 - 31/10/43, Memorandum of a Discussion between General Brooke and General McNaughton, 7 October 1943.

(3) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. XIV, C4875, 12 October 1943.

General Stuart recommended the proposal, in spite of the fact that McNaughton's request for a guarantee that his army would be re-united before an invasion could not be given. The dispersion of the army would, he said, solve the morale problems. The War Committee gave its approval.

The decision to disperse the army had been made for all the political reasons Stuart had referred to back in 1942. The army's inactivity had been having an adverse effect on public opinion. The dispersal put an end to this particular threat to Canadian support for the war effort. As King had said in August, 1943, "I believe the Canadian people would rather have our men in Italy than remain inactive in Britain throughout the winter."⁽¹⁾ This political pressure was not, in all probability, a suitable basis for such an important decision. Certainly, General McNaughton did not think so. In November 1943, he explained again why the army should have been kept together.

[I]n Husky, we...had retained some measure of operational control in that. I had asked for and been freely given access to all plans, incl. those for the return of the 1 Cdn. Div. etc. in the late Autumn of 1943... As a result of subsequent actions and our own insistence on sending out additional Cdn. forces against the views of the C.I.G.S., all operational control had evaporated.⁽²⁾

General Eisenhower (Allied C-in-C in the Mediterranean) did not

(1) PAC, King Diary, 31 August 1943.

(2) PAC, McNaughton Papers, Vol. 250, War Diary, 1/11/43 - 30/11/43, Memorandum of a discussion between Ralston, McNaughton and Stuart, 5 November 1943 (dated 10 November).

General Eisenhower (Allied C-in-C in the Mediterranean) did not want the Canadian Corps and could not promise them an active role.(1) The Corps was detailed for "sedentary duties" for almost three months.(2) General Alexander told Brooke that "the proposed move of the Canadian Armoured Division has come as a complete surprise to me. We already have as much armour as we can usefully employ in Italy...I do not want another Corps Headquarters at this stage. I shall be grateful if I can be consulted in future before matters of such importance are agreed upon. These decisions upset my order of battle which in turn affects my plans for battle."(3) General Spry called the situation "a waste of effort - a dispersion of effort, and one of the principles of war is concentration of effort...it was a political move. It certainly had political approval."(4)

Those people who had been in favour of sending a corps to Italy had proved to be a persuasive lot. It seems all of them were responding to political pressure. The War Committee had given its sanction. General Crerar had told Ralston earlier in July that he was "very strong for additional participation by further troops now in England. They are buoyed up now by

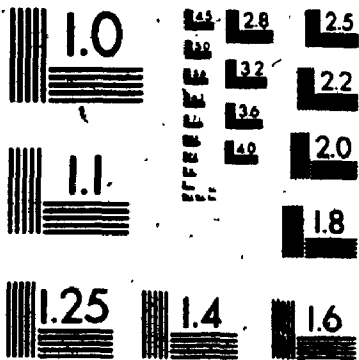
(1) Swettenham, Vol. 2, p. 327.

(2) G.W.L. Nicholson, Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War, Vol. 11, The Canadians in Italy, 1943-1945 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1956) pp.362-365.

(3) Nicholson, p. 344.

(4) Spry Interview, 16 May 1985.

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atmosphere of impending action. Would be very serious if expectations not realized." (1) The decision to disperse the army had been made on a governmental basis, in complete disregard for McNaughton's views. As Stacey wrote:

in its campaign to get part of its army into action in Italy the government of Canada worked entirely through British channels and the British authorities exerted themselves to meet its views, even though military considerations might have justified a different attitude...the British authorities would have been on strong ground in continuing to resist the Canadian government's importunities...A policy which is inimical to effective national control of the forces...and at the same time is open to criticism on military grounds, has little to recommend it. (2)

McNaughton's wishes to concentrate his army in England had been ignored. Ralston and Stuart had accepted General Crerar's July recommendation over McNaughton's. Why had McNaughton been unable to influence Ottawa? The simple answer, of course, is that McNaughton's opposition to 'action for action's sake' could not have quelled the public's antipathy over the army's inactivity. Against this pressure, McNaughton's warnings over the loss of operational control and the disequilibrium of his army, seemed insignificant to King, Ralston, Stuart and Crerar. As well, McNaughton's loss of prestige over Dieppe and his diminished credibility after "Spartan" had undermined the value of his sound military advice to keep the army intact. His serious

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 59, English Trip Diary and Notes, 1943, 30 July 1943.

(2) Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 229.

disagreement with the government could not have helped his case.

These factors were given added weight by the British High Command's refusal to accept McNaughton as a field commander. At the "Trident" Conference in Washington in May 1943, General Brooke "made certain remarks," to General Stuart, "on his own volition concerning McNaughton. These remarks indicated...that the C.I.G.S. had some doubt as to McNaughton's fitness to command in the field." (1) Stuart conveyed Brooke's concerns to Ralston, and in July, Ralston passed them on to King. In August, Brooke confirmed what Ralston had told King when the C.I.G.S. complained about McNaughton to the Prime Minister. (2) Ralston became involved first hand in August, when Brooke told him that:

for some time had been worried about McNaughton. Great abilities in technology, development and scientific and technical side of Army organization, but doubtful as to command. Instanced "Spartan" as confirming these doubts... (3)

General Paget expressed his own doubts over McNaughton in November 1943. (4) Both Paget and Brooke made it very clear that

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- (1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 52, McNaughton Resignation, General K. Stuart, "Substance of Conversations Between General Sir Alan Brooke, C.I.G.S. and Lt.-General K. Stuart, CGS, Canada, in Connection with the Fitness of Lt.-General A.G.L. McNaughton to Command in the Field." 13 November 1943.
- (2) PAC, King Diary, 14 August 1943.
- (3) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 59, English Trip Diary and Notes, 3 August 1943, Memorandum of a Discussion, Brooke, Ralston and Stuart.
- (4) Ibid. Overseas Trip, Diary and Notes 1943, Memorandum of Discussion, Paget, Stuart and Ralston, 8 November 1943.

they would not accept McNaughton as a field commander. He lacked, they said, battle experience and sound judgement. He spent too much time on experiments and not enough on training his men. Moreover, the strain of his four year's command had taken its toll.(1)

When Ralston had heard of Brooke's views in the summer, he had been faced with a difficult situation. General McNaughton was a popular leader and he was not anxious to remove him from his command unless it was absolutely necessary. When the Defence Minister had discussed McNaughton with Brooke in August, it had been agreed that a "decision" would probably be made in N.A. [North Africa] which would determine whether Canadian Corps would be sent. Then we could decide best man to deal with Army."(2) It seems fairly clear that Ralston had been trying to buy time. But when General Paget informed the Canadian Government of his

(1) Ibid. and Memorandum of a Discussion with General Brooke, 11 November 1943. The British used "Spartan" as their justification for McNaughton's forced retirement. Canadians, however, have tended to agree that while McNaughton was probably not suited to command the Canadian Army after 1943, his age and strain - not "Spartan" - were reasons which justified his removal from the 'hot-seat'. Stacey wrote "there is considerable evidence to indicate that he [McNaughton] was hardly in a mental or physical state to undertake the responsibilities of high command in a great campaign." Stacey, Arms, Men and Governments, p. 247. General Spry doubts that McNaughton should have stayed in command of the Army. "It was a young man's war. It required considerable physical stamina as well as whatever brains one could summon. It was a young man's occupation." McNaughton was too old and tired to be an effective commander. Spry Interview, 16 May 1985.

(2) Ibid. English Trip Diary and Notes 1943, Memorandum of a Discussion, Brooke, Ralston and Stuart, 3 August 1943.

plans for North-West Europe in October 1943, the question of which Canadian would be in command during the invasion became critical. As Ralston told the War Committee, "it was not likely that the War Office intended to include Lieutenant-General McNaughton as Army Commander." (1)

Ralston and Stuart went back to England in November. As Stuart reports, "The Minister was reluctant to act. He felt that McNaughton's condition might improve and that Brooke and Paget might...change their minds...He did not wish to bring it to a head until events demanded action." (2) Stuart's opinion was that "a military situation had arisen and that it had to be faced." (3) The problem was that McNaughton assumed he would be the commander. (4) Ralston continued to press Brooke and Paget to accept McNaughton. "Paget said he would accept Crerar, in spite

(1) PAC, Minutes of the Cabinet War Committee, Vol. XIV, C4875, 21 October 1943.

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 52, McNaughton Resignation, Memorandum on General Stuart's Views for the Prime Minister, 12 November 1943.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Ibid. Vol. 59, Diary and Notes for Overseas Trip 1943, Summary of Conversations, 5 November 1943. "McNaughton talking about commanding 1st Canadian Army... I asked him about command because as I told him (McN.) in August, C.I.G.S. had indicated he was not ready to accept army commander staff without battle experience and we were going to see C.I.G.S. tomorrow and I wondered if he had changed." As Stuart told Paget on 8 November, "you have given us a dirty deal in going on as if McNaughton would command the show." Ibid. Memorandum of Discussion, Ralston, Stuart and Paget, 8 November 1943.

of his lack of battle experience, but not McNaughton." (1) Then, Ralston saw Brooke. "I told him we would be glad if he could accept him. Said wouldn't want to. I said if we insisted. He would make stronger representations." (2) With the issue threatening to become a political crisis, Ralston gave way. McNaughton would resign and Crerar would assume the command. (3)

McNaughton had been pried from his command but it had been Paget and Brooke who had put the pressure on the Canadian government. Ralston had tried to avoid a showdown, but in the end, the British influence had been too persuasive. It has been suggested that British impatience with McNaughton's obsession with constitutional details had been at the root of their disapproval. (4) While this certainly had created tensions between the two commands, "Spartan" probably played a more decisive role in McNaughton's downfall. McNaughton had not given a very credible performance. Crerar had, and so it seems logical that Paget and Brooke would have preferred him over McNaughton as commander. As far as the Canadians' acquiescence to the British is concerned, their hands were tied. But presumably, if Ralston

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid. Memorandum of Discussion with Brooke, 11 November 1943.

(3) The telegrams which flew between Ottawa and London over McNaughton's resignation have been fully recorded in Stacey's Arms, Men and Governments. They will be discussed further in the next chapter.

(4) Swettenham and Stacey agree on this.

and Stuart had had confidence in General McNaughton, his departure may not have been such a foregone conclusion. They had resisted British pressure before, as their insistence on sending a Corps to Italy has shown.

McNaughton had begun his administration of the Canadian forces overseas by illustrating a remarkable reconciliation of the political and military imperatives which had been combined in his command. His concept of a balanced force complimented industrial mobilization and it seemed to reduce the spectre of a reinforcement problem. McNaughton's constitutional struggles fell directly into line with the importance Canada placed on securing her autonomy from Great Britain. In short, McNaughton had a penetrating understanding of the nation's political and industrial fabric, and he had directed his energy towards making his army into a true expression of all his country, represented. But Canada had become a difficult entity to define. The nation which had so hesitantly declared war on Germany had become caught up in the momentum of the war itself. Canadians became increasingly impatient with their army's static role in England and the ensuing pressure for action had made politics more important to the politicians than the effective disposition of the army.

As a commander, perhaps McNaughton had outlived his usefulness. He was tired, perhaps too old to continue his role as GOC, and he seems not to have been the best man to take the

Canadian Army into the field. But there was considerable merit, both political and military, to his ideals for his army. If McNaughton was dispensable, those ideals were not. The balance he had tried to effect between the political and military imperatives disappeared as Ottawa gave increasing attention to the effects of the war on Canada's domestic stability.

The salient issue, of course, is whether in Canada's war, the political imperatives should have outweighed the military. From a military point of view, it appears that political interference was inimical to the effectiveness of the Canadian Army as a fighting force. But if political imperatives were more important, and it appears that they were, perhaps they deserved the ascendancy ascribed to them by the politicians, even at the expense of military efficiency. There is no easy answer to this question, but it seems that one could be attempted by assessing the political and the military price of political interference. It looks as though the cost outweighed the benefits. Hydra-like, political interference in the military sphere raised a new problem for each one it tried to solve.

The employment of the Canadian Army turned out to be a powder-keg. Early in the war, King and Ralston, sensing the potential for trouble over the Army's inactivity, pushed for action. In 1942, Crerar took up their momentum and campaigned for Canada's involvement in Dieppe. The effect of this campaign was a new scandal in the Canadian public's view (albeit a fairly

small one) over the high casualty rates incurred in the raid. Undaunted, however, Ralston, King and General Stuart pressed the British to put the Canadians into a theatre of operations in 1943. But sending troops to Sicily merely whet the public's appetite for further action. So the Canadian Army, against all military rationale, was dispersed and a full corps was established in the Mediterranean theatre. Operational control and a balanced army were thrown away, but on the home front, a political crisis had been averted. The price of the dispersion of the Canadian Army was the most severe of all, notwithstanding its immediate political benefit. In the wake of this decision, and largely as a result of it, a hideous reinforcement problem in the Canadian Army arose in Europe in the fall of 1944, and with it, the political conscription crisis.

Better Late Than Never?

Subordination to the facts of Canadian political life was an inescapable experience for the military authorities between 1935 and 1945. Because military activity had the power to become a politically divisive force, government control was an essential feature of Canadian civil-military relations. Military priorities were subordinated to the King government's concern for national unity and military policy was thus determined by assessing the relative importance of the military to domestic stability. This importance fluctuated as a result of domestic pressures, not because of the military exigencies of the international situation.

Before 1939, adequate defence preparations had had a lower political priority than national unity. The outbreak of war might have been expected to ease the military's political subordination, but it did not. During the Second World War, national unity was more important to the government than the military effectiveness of its army. Was there any situation in which military imperatives would be permitted to take precedence over political imperatives? How would the government respond to a military crisis in the Canadian Army itself?

The significance of the conscription crisis of 1944 to this study is that it shows that the pre-eminence of national unity was immutable. When the King government conscripted 16,000

soldiers for overseas service in November 1944, it looked as though the military had finally escaped from its subordination to the Canadian political context.(1) But the government was not really responding to the military crisis which had been raised by the severe reinforcement problems in the Canadian Army. Instead, it was attempting to quell the domestic pressure for conscription which arose when the reinforcement situation became public knowledge. If Mackenzie King had thought conscription would fracture the nation in 1944, no such measure would have been taken.

In June 1940, the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA) had given the government the right to conscript soldiers for home defence. In 1940, General Crerar (Chief of the General Staff) had called this manpower policy a "direct conflict in policy - compulsion at home, voluntary enlistment for overseas. These were mutually destructive."(2) Since 1942, the government had had the authority to conscript the NRMA soldiers (also known as 'Zombies') for overseas service 'if necessary', but in light of French Canada's adamant rejection of this provision in a national

(1) James Eayrs discussed the conscription crisis in this vein. 1944 was the single "threatened exception" to civilian control of the army. James Eayrs, The Art of the Possible: Government and Foreign Policy in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) p. 75 and pp. 92-95. See also, Bruce Hutchison, "Mackenzie King and the 'Revolt' of the Army", Maclean's Magazine 15 May 1953.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) J.W.Dafoe Papers, MG30D45, M79, June-December 1940, "Memorandum of a conversation with Major-General H.D. Crerar, CGS, 19 September 1940."

plebiscite, the government was understandably wary of invoking conscription at all. The policy was a political compromise, but when the Canadian Army began to suffer from an acute shortage of trained reinforcements in 1944, the fact that there were thousands of trained infantry soldiers in Canada who would not assist the Army overseas, became a serious source of controversy.

Historians who have examined the conscription crisis of 1944 agree that there was a severe shortage of reinforcements in the Canadian Army. In general, however, they disagree that the military crisis had been serious enough to warrant conscription. The usual approach has been to assess the factors which had created the reinforcement problems. In general, it is found that the military had miscalculated its manpower requirements, that the government had made too large a commitment to the armed forces, and that there had been a superfluity of administrative and non-infantry personnel in the military. Apart from the implication that the crisis could have been avoided, the essence of the argument against conscription is that by adjusting any or all of these mistakes, a solution to the reinforcement shortages could have been found without resorting to conscription. Finally, by noting the use which was made of the 16,000 conscripts (only 12,908 went overseas and a mere 2,463 were absorbed into field units)(1) it has been questioned whether invoking conscription was, in the end, justified.

(1) C.P. Stacey, Arms, Men, and Governments: The War Policies of Canada, 1939-1945 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1970) p. 479.

C.P. Stacey's Arms, Men and Governments gives a comprehensive examination of the military and political sides to the conscription crisis. He notes that the crisis in 1944 "concerned not so much the actual existing situation, as the situation which would inevitably arise if the war with Germany went on and Canadian troops were involved in continuous heavy fighting." (1) Since no one could have predicted the war would end early in 1945, conscription was justified, if only as a contingency for the worst scenario.

Few, if any other works on the crisis believe that conscription was justified. J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman's work, Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada is a thoughtful analysis but it denies that the military need had been pressing enough to justify such a momentous political compromise. The authors blame both the military and the politicians for the reinforcement crisis and ask the important question "[i]s it worthwhile to impose conscription if by doing so you threaten to destroy the nation and the national unity that the men at the front are presumably fighting to preserve?" (2) In other words, had the time arrived when military needs should have over-riden political requirements? In Granatstein and Hitsman's view, it had not.

W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous agree that

(1) p.482.

(2) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977) p. 266

conscription was unwarranted.

"For Canadians in every walk of life, in or out of service, the reinforcement problem, which brought the conscription crisis to a head, reflected emotional and cultural prejudices rather than military necessity. A combination of political paranoia, inept administration and the widespread conviction of the volunteer servicemen and veterans...that the army could not carry out its mission without conscription, had created a mountain out of a molehill."(1)

R. MacGrigor Dawson said "Any layman...simply cannot believe the statement that it was impossible to secure 15,000 men from a pool of...between 165,000 and 170,000."(2) General E.L.M. Burns, author of the impressive Manpower in the Canadian Army, 1939-1945 echoes Dawson's incredulity. There were too many men in the support corps. Command echelons had been inflated to service a Canadian spirit of exclusiveness, and the Army lacked an efficient means of handling reinforcements. "The major waste of manpower," Burns concludes, "was not in the casualties incurred in battle, but in the extravagant use of men for administrative purposes."(3)

The common thread in all of these works is that not one acknowledges (with the qualified exception of Stacey) that the Canadian Army was facing a severe crisis which, at the time, only

(1) Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) p. 247.

(2) The Conscription Crisis of 1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961) p. 33.

(3) (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company Ltd, 1956) p. 166.

conscription would solve. If it can be established that there was a crisis of considerable magnitude, the meaning of conscription changes entirely. Historians have asked why the government responded to an exaggerated military crisis by invoking conscription. This present enquiry asks quite different questions, namely: how did the government respond to a military crisis within its own Army, and did its response reflect the military exigencies of the situation? These questions will lead to an evaluation of whether conscription was as dramatic a reversal in policy as historians have traditionally suspected.

As Burns' work notes so definitively, the military had been plagued by an unwieldy administrative structure which had been complicated by the establishment of a Corps Headquarters in Italy. General D.C. Spry commented that:

instead of having one administrative tail stretching out behind us, we now had two. A lot of manpower was eaten up by having two sets of base and field troops, two lines of communication troops and ammunition and stores dumps, recreation and 'R and R' places... We had to have two systems of reinforcements and as the war went on, the available manpower tapered off. (1)...

(1) Interview with Major-General D.C. Spry, CBE DSO OBE, Ottawa, Ontario, 16 May 1985. For General Burns' views, see, pp. 24-43. He notes that 13.6% of the strength in the Canadian Army in Europe was absorbed in headquarters and overhead, as compared to the American Army, where only 3.5% was thus employed. p. 24. John Swettenham, in his biography of General McNaughton, agrees with this, noting that McNaughton's Army had been developed on the basis of fighting as a whole in a single theatre. Splitting the Army was an expensive use of manpower. John Swettenham, McNaughton, Vol. III, 1944-1956 (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969) p. 20.

This was a critical aspect of the government's decision to satisfy the public's demands to put the Canadians into action in 1943. Splitting the Army taxed an already overloaded manpower circuit. But the root of the reinforcement crisis, the factor from which all the problems grew, was the military's miscalculation of its manpower requirements(1)

Carlo D'Este gives a good explanation of the miscalculations in manpower requirements. The British had predicted casualties on the basis of the fighting in North Africa, but these figures proved inaccurate for the European theatre. The War Office "computed the total numbers [this emphasis] of reinforcements required fairly accurately, but where the blunder occurred was in their estimation of infantry losses.(2) Since the summer of 1942, the Canadian Army had been using the War Office figures to predict its reinforcement requirements: "The Canadian Army, after all, had had no battle experience on which to base rates of

(1) Douglas and Greenhous give a good account of secondary contributing factors, noting competition between the Army and the Airforce for recruits, the disincentives for French-Canadians to enlist and the weight of prejudice against the Zombies which persuaded many to remain, defiantly, in Canada. (pp. 185-197). Granatstein and Hitsman discuss the strain on manpower resources which had been created by competing interest in industrial and military mobilizations. (pp. 185-197). Burns and Stacey note that the stringent physical standards for recruits were unreasonable. (Stacey, p. 415 and Burns, pp. 11-113).

(2) Carlo D'Este, Decision in Normandy: The Unwritten Story of Montgomery and the Allied Campaign (London: Pan Books Ltd. 1984) p. 259.

its own."(1) Once in Italy, however, the Canadian Corps noted discrepancies between predicted and actual infantry casualties.(2)

Later in December, Brigadier A.W. Beament (Officer-in-Charge, Canadian Section, G.H.Q. 1st Echelon, 21st Army Group) asked Canadian Military Headquarters (CMHQ) to give infantry reinforcements a greater priority. General Stuart, now Chief of Staff, CMHQ, demurred on the basis of the War Office's advice (passed on by National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ)) that 50% of the casualties in all ranks of the field force would be recoverable after six months. This was a misinterpretation of the War Office's figures; those figures did not consider that the recovered troops would be fit for service in active operations. This considerable error had been committed at a time when the reinforcement situation might easily have been solved. By rejecting Beament's request, CMHQ allowed it to fester.(3)

The Army did not remain a silent partner in the reinforcement affair. Staff officers in London, General Crerar (Commander, First Canadian Army) and even General Montgomery (21st Army Group) had complained about the reinforcement

(1) Stacey, p. 425.

(2) In July of 1943, it was reported that for the infantry, 132 casualties for officers and 2150 for other ranks had been predicted. Actual casualties were 220 and 3885 respectively. The discrepancy for the other services was negligible. Ibid. p: 435.

(3) Stacey, pp. 424-426. Stacey suggests that Stuart was in opposition to this plan because he wanted to re-assert Ottawa's control over the Army.

shortages. In response, a remustering programme was begun to offset infantry deficiencies and Ottawa intensified its efforts to persuade NRMA soldiers to volunteer for active service overseas. The latter did not meet with notable success but the remustering programme, which began in earnest in August 1944, was more fruitful. (1) In March 1943, however, General Stuart forbade any communication concerning reinforcements to be despatched to Ottawa without his approval. (2) The combination of the conversion training scheme and General Stuart's information black-out created a very new and ultimately tragic problem for the Canadian Army. The conversion training programme did not give the remustered men sufficient training as infantry soldiers and the generals had no means of communicating the serious nature of the problem. (3)

This was the aspect of the reinforcement crisis which

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- (1) "1311 men were remustered in 19 April and 564 on 1 May. There was no further remustering until August. Ibid. pp. 437-438 and 427-430.
- (2) Ibid. pp. 227-440. In May 1943, Stuart told Ralston that he had taken care of "alarmist cables" over reinforcements. Stacey notes Ralston's complicity in Stuart's cover-up of the situation. But could Ralston not have accepted Stuart's action on the basis that 'alarmist' cables were ones which aroused unnecessary or excessive alarm? In other words, Stuart's words belied the existence of a problem, and since reports on reinforcements from NDHQ and CMHQ were positive until the fall of 1944, Ralston would have had no reason to suspect otherwise.
- (3) Douglas and Greenhous ask why administrative staff could not have been converted. In light of the inadequacies of the training programme, this would not have met with useful results. Douglas and Greenhous, p. 247.

exploded upon an unsuspecting Canada in September 1944. A statement from the hockey promoter, Major Conn Smythe, then a wounded soldier returning home to Canada, created a political maelstrom. Smythe reported that reinforcements to the Canadian units were:

green, inexperienced and poorly trained...Practically all have little or no knowledge of the Bren Gun and, finally, most of them have never seen a PIAT anti-tank gun, let alone fired one...large numbers of unnecessary casualties result from this greenness, both to the rookie and to the older soldiers, who have the added task of trying to look after the newcomers as well as themselves.(1)

The government was incredulous. As late as 3 August, General Stuart had told the War Committee that there were plenty of reserves. He had asked for approval for a new brigade for the 5th Division in Italy, and had said that "the war would likely be over before any further numbers would be required beyond those already available."(2) The only communication which had even hinted at a shortage of trained numbers had been a despatch from Stuart on 26 August, but even it did not reflect the severity of the problem. It described the remustering programme and the infantry shortages, and said "[t]he present situation is not a manpower problem in the true sense. We have the men...In three

(1) Montreal Gazette, 19 September 1944, in Stacey, p. 444.

(2) J.W.Pickersgill and D.F. Forster, The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. II, 1944-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) p. 112.

weeks to a month we shall be alright." (1) Stuart's cable was the only indication the government had that there was a training problem, but its tone was sufficiently under-stated so as not to gain the Minister's attention.

Smythe's statement was more damning politically than news that the reinforcement pool had dwindled would have been. It threatened to rally not only those who opposed conscription, but those who had friends and relatives in the Army overseas, behind a storm of protest against the government. The government was the agent responsible for the well-being of the troops. The Wartime Information Board reported that Smythe's charges (which were later supported by Premier George Drew in October) "caused a flurry of comment, chiefly in papers regularly hostile to the government. They demand a full investigation." (2) Ralston began to receive a raft of correspondence from Canadians whose soldier-friends and relatives had been recently killed (or

(1) Stacey, p. 439. This was the telegram which Ralston initialed and filed away without showing it to the War Committee. He would earn censure for this at a later date from King. It is not clear that the cable was indicative of a crisis situation and it is perhaps understandable that Ralston would not have been concerned by its contents. Public Archives of Canada (PAC) J.L. Ralston Papers, MG27111, B11, Vol. 84, King to Ralston, 3 November 1944.

(2) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) William Lyon Mackenzie King Papers, MG26, J4, Vol. 427, "Privy Council Office, War Committee Memoranda, October-December 1944, Wartime Information Board Survey No. 47, 7 October 1944.

"murdered" as many of the correspondents charged)(1) and the bewildered Minister of Defence hastily left for Europe to investigate the matter.

Historians have told us two things about Ralston's trip (26 September to 18 October). First, he had been sufficiently alarmed at the shortage of reinforcements to recommend to the Prime Minister the immediate despatch of NRMA soldiers overseas. Secondly, the standard of training given to the reinforcements had been satisfactory. (2) Had the reinforcement crisis exploded in Canada as a result of a fabrication from Major Smythe? (3)

A recent publication gives persuasive evidence that the training issue had considerable substance. In their account of the Battle of the Scheldt, Denis and Shelagh Whitaker found that units had been forced to set up makeshift training classrooms on the battlefields. Whitaker was commanding the Royal Hamilton

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 62, "Major Connie Smythe, September-October 1944. These letters, many of which were anonymous and hastily scribbled, make for horrifying reading. "My husband," wrote one woman, "only had two weeks training in Canada as a foot soldier. He was sent to the front after his home leave, and he died a week later." Ibid. no date. While the nature of these letters is highly emotional, they do reflect the popular feeling which had begun to run against the Defence Minister.

(2) Stacey, pp.441-442; Douglas and Greenhous, p. 244; Granatstein and Hitsman, p.211.

(3) Stacey says that Smythe could not have witnessed the effects of the remustering programme since it did not begin in earnest until after Smythe had been wounded. (p. 440). The crisis had begun after Normandy, and so had the remustering. What Smythe reported to the press seems to have been common knowledge to the soldiers overseas.

Light Infantry at the time, and he described his own experience with the reinforcements.

Something was terribly wrong, I felt, when you had people arriving at the front who could not recognize a Bren gun and had never thrown a grenade. I tried, in a bare half hour, to instil in these men some essential knowledge for survival, but it was a pretty futile exercise, as all of us at Tac headquarters realized. It would take a minimum of at least three months to get a team that was even starting to get together.(1)

Taking time out from battle, the old hands of the Royal Regiment, the Essex Scottish, the Black Watch, the Highland Light Infantry and the Queen's Own Rifles, taught the newcomers about fire and movement and basic weaponry before sending them into battle against highly trained German soldiers. According to the Whitakers, the most the reinforcements probably gained from these sessions was to learn when to duck and when to run.(2) The Canadians were having to cope in the most rudimentary of ways with a severe and debilitating military crisis at a time when numbers were at a premium. This, to the soldiers, was nothing short of political perfidy. The thousands of well-trained NRMA soldiers in Canada were urgently needed. The commanders had tried to get the message across to Stuart, but he had quashed

(1) Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, Tug of War: The Canadian Victory That Opened Antwerp (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. 1984) p. 219.

(2) Ibid. pp. 217-226. Most of the Whitakers' evidence came from personal interviews with veterans from the above-mentioned units. J.L. Granatstein said the Whitakers' work "gave a disturbing message that should compel a re-examination of the conscription crisis in 1944." Maclean's Magazine, 12 November 1984.

their communications for their 'alarmist' content. When the government was finally informed of the crisis, it should, according to the Whitakers, have sent the Zombies over immediately. "We had always believed that we had an implied contract with Canada. We were willing to risk our lives for our country, but we expected our country to back us up, with adequate weapons and tactical support and trained manpower. These poor transferees they sent us had been betrayed - and so had we." (1)

Did Ralston know that such a critical situation existed? When the Minister was in Italy, General Vokes (commanding the 1st Canadian Division) told him in no uncertain terms that "untrained men were being sent into battle and their chances of survival - of being any use at all - were zero. I told him we were way under strength and I told him the government had better do something, - fast." (2) On 29 September, the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of the 48 Highlanders complained that of a recent group of 72 reinforcements, only 7 had been fully trained. Ralston passed the complaint on to Brigadier Weeks (head of the Canadian Static Headquarters) who investigated 34 of the 72 cases. He found that most of the men had been in the Army for two and three years and that complaints about weapons training

(1) Ibid. pp. 219-220.

(2) Interview, Major-General Christopher Vokes, CB CBE DSO, Oakville, Ontario, 10 November 1984.

and a lack of infantry experience could not be understood.(1) It was true that all the men had had basic training, but their experience in the Army had been as clerks, drivers and signallers. Some had been new recruits from the Canadian Infantry Training Regiments (CITRs)(2)

If Ralston doubted the validity of the 48 Highlanders' complaints, he would see almost identical reports on inferior training from the Black Watch.

Analyzing the training background of 379 all ranks in the four rifle companies of the Black Watch, [it was]...discovered that 174, or forty-five percent of the men, had had one month's training or less as infantry before joining the battalion.(3)

Ralston also heard pointed criticisms from the RSMs of General Vokes' nine battalions.(4)

The Minister of Defence discussed the situation with General G. Simonds (Acting Commander, 1st Canadian Army) on 8 October, when he visited him in Antwerp. Then, the Army Commander told Ralston about the reinforcement problems. The only records which

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 62, "Major Connie Smythe, September-October 1944", Memorandum, Complaints of Field Units on State of Training of Reinforcements Per Nr. W33, Haldenby from Weeks, 1 October 1944. The Whitakers doubt if reports from the training centres would have been self-critical. (p. 227).

(2) Ibid.

(3) War Diary, Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada, 19 October 1944, in Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, p. 222.

(4) Ibid. p. 227.

exist of the conversation are Ralston's original notes and his secretary's typewritten transcriptions. According to Ralston, the conversation went as follows:

asked about reinforcements

have been down somewhat
Div commanders spoke of it
although have numbers very well up - the
casualties are in rifle co's and larger
proportion of shortages consequently is in
these co's.

never got to a point where fighting
efficiency impaired

Stuart had explained to him

I said remustering every man possible - memo
seemed to show numbers enough till year end
only other source NRMA which wouldn't be
easy

Asked about training - said any co would say
men not trained as he would train them

They do talk of training at times but when
pinned down they haven't any serious
complaint

taken as a whole reinforcements very
satisfactory(1)

This is a peculiar document, both in its ambiguity (Ralston's notes do not indicate who said what to whom) and in its conclusion that the training the reinforcements had received was

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 62, Misc. Notes and Addresses, September-October 1944, 8 October 1944. In an uncharacteristic lapse of meticulousness, C.P. Stacey printed the transcription of this document which was quite different from Ralston's own notes. According to Ralston's secretary, his notes read "Asked about reinforcements. Have been down somewhat. Did commanders speak of it?" (Stacey, p. 442) The Whitakers discussed the implications of this error (p. 231) without distinguishing between the hand-written and the typed copy, with the effect of undermining the impact of this mistake. As the Whitakers note, the mistake worked to create the erroneous impression that Simonds found the reinforcements satisfactory. Historians thereafter have not believed that there was a serious crisis in the Army which involved a shortage of trained reinforcements.

satisfactory. The document does give a good indication that a shortage existed in the infantry. Given the problems he was experiencing, it is very unlikely that General Simonds would have misrepresented the situation to Ralston. It is also unlikely that Ralston's notes record Simonds' views on the calibre of training, apart from the fact that his divisional commanders had spoken about it.

General Spry doubts that Simonds would have given Ralston the impression that the reinforcements had been well-trained. "Simonds told Ralston that the reinforcements were pitiful. I had told Simonds. So had the other divisional commanders. Not only pitiful, but there weren't enough of them.(1) Since Simonds had been "deluged by reports to the contrary from all of his staff" the Whitakers are very sceptical that Simonds would have been less than frank about the calibre of reinforcements his Army had been receiving.(2) The best explanation of Ralston's notes is simply that Simonds did tell Ralston about the problems with the reinforcements, and that Ralston had told Simonds about his views on the subject. This, of course, is only an

(1) Spry Interview, 16 May 1985. General Spry also recalls that when Ralston went to meet Simonds, "I was all set to really blow my top because of the lack of reinforcements and the inadequacy of them - their standards - and a staff officer from on high intercepted me and said "I've been instructed to take you for a walk while the Minister visits headquarters" and I never did speak to Ralston - I was never allowed to."

(2) Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, p. 231.

interpretation.(1)

There is a piece of evidence which seemingly confirms the view that Simonds had not been concerned about reinforcements. M.J. Coldwell (National Chairman for the C.C.F.) made a statement to the press that according to General Simonds, "[r]einforcements for the Canadian troops in France and Belgium "are satisfactory both as to numbers and training".(2) Ralston was with Coldwell at the time and since even Ralston was willing to admit publicly that there was a shortage of numbers, it is difficult to put much credibility on Coldwell's statement. Furthermore, Ralston's notes (and he was a witness) make no mention of Simonds' approval of either equipment or the calibre of reinforcements. Instead, Ralston's notes reflect his appreciation of the training problem.

(1) In this case, the conversation would have gone as follows:

[R] asked about reinforcements [S] have been down somewhat

Div commanders spoke of it

although have numbers very well up - the casualties are in rifle co's and larger proportion of shortages consequently is in these co's. [R] never got to a point where fighting efficiency impaired? [S] Stuart had explained to him [R] I said remustering every man possible - memo seemed to show numbers enough till year end

only other source NRMA which wouldn't be easy

Asked about training - said any co would say men not trained as he would train them

They do talk of training at times but when pinned down they haven't any serious complaint

taken as a whole reinforcements very satisfactory

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 62, "Major Connie Smythe, September-October 1944", Toronto Star, 10 October 1944.

Simmonds (sic) to Coldwell

units named -
 let Co's take action
 those units busy
 Have referred to Army Commander for such
 action as thinks fit, His Officers, His
 Units.
 have made some enquiries myself - regardless
 of who puts it forward - I want to be sure
 its either not well-founded or if it is that
 it is checked...(1)

If this record is accurate, Coldwell does not appear to have been reassured by Simmonds that all was well in the Army.(2) In fact, Ralston seems to have been discussing how best to solve the training situation. His conclusion that the complaints should be checked thoroughly indicates not only that there were complaints about training, but also that the Defence Minister was concerned about them. This is quite a different appreciation of the military crisis than that which has traditionally been given.

In any case, however concerned Ralston may have been about the training problem, and it seems he was more concerned with disproving its existence than with anything else, when he returned to Canada with General Stuart and recommended immediate conscription, the training issue was not mentioned. A memorandum which General Stuart prepared for Ralston to present at the War Committee explains the two men's views. Stuart wrote that since

(1) Ibid. Vol. 62; "Misc. Notes and Addresses, September-October 1944, date illegible.

(2) Granatstein and Hitsman use Coldwell's statement to demonstrate that Simmonds did not believe the crisis was serious. (p. 211).

he had believed the Germans would collapse before the new year, reinforcements had seemed to him to have been adequate, but now, higher casualties had reduced the:

pool of reinforcements as of 31 December 1944 to very small proportions...I am not satisfied...that anticipated reinforcements will be adequate for future requirements, either on a long term or short term basis...the time has come when the future effective maintenance of our Canadian forces in two theatres requires that NRMA personnel be made available for service overseas.

Stuart also said that he was "satisfied that the reinforcements sent and being sent to both theatres have been well trained." (1) Ralston had told Simonds to handle the situation. Having done so, it seems that recommending conscription was the only option Ralston had of correcting the shortage of trained infantry reinforcements.

Why were the problems with the training not acknowledged by Ralston? First of all, it is probable that he was aware of the dangers in evaluating the calibre of military training. (2) Such evaluations can fall prey to subjectivity. Stacey wrote that it

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 63, "Fall 1944, Exchange of Cables with Ralston", approved by Ralston, 13 October 1944.

(2) Ralston wondered whether the commanders were perhaps confusing battle experience with adequate training. The British put great emphasis on battle experience (it was one of the High Commands' complaints about McNaughton) which, it is true, is the best way for a soldier to become skilled. PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 62, "Misc. Notes and Addresses, September-October 1944", date illegible. It appears that the commanders were complaining of something more fundamental than battle experience, however. Their complaints were about the basic training the reinforcements had had.

"is a notorious fact of army life that no commanding officer ever admits that the reinforcements his units receive have been properly trained."(1) Ralston told a reporter that, as an old soldier himself, he knew that "every commanding officer has a tendency to feel that no training his men get is quite as good as that received in his own unit."(2) He was aware that "standards...cannot be subject to the individual opinions of any co. commander or platoon leader who chooses to pass judgement."(3) The Canadian training system seemed to Ralston to have been "business-like and adequate" and since the staff at the training centres had given their assurances that the training syllabus had been followed to the letter, Ralston might easily have been persuaded that no problems existed.(4)

General Spry acknowledges that "nobody is ever satisfied with the training of recruits. It's just hokum." But, as Spry further indicates, it was 'hokum' which played against the Canadian field commanders in 1944. "We weren't kidding this

(1) Stacey, p. 440.

(2) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 63, "Fall 1944 Press and Radio Conferences", 9 October 1944, Interview with Peter Stursberg. This line is almost identical to the one in the 8 October record of Ralston's conversation with Simonds.

(3) Ibid. Vol. 62, "Misc. Notes and Addresses, September-October 1944", date illegible.

(4) Ibid.

time."(1) Whitaker agrees emphatically. "We commanders had long since stopped caring, if in fact we had ever cared, where and by whom an infantryman had been trained."(2) It seems very likely that Ralston had permitted his recognition of a commander's bias to fill him with caution against accepting complaints that training had been inferior.

Then too, Ralston had to be cautious. He had been told by Simonds, by divisional commanders and by the RSMs of at least nine battalions that the real problem the Canadian Army was facing was a shortage of trained infantry reinforcements. He had seen reports from the 48 Highlanders and the Black Watch on the inferior training of their reinforcements. Even though the 48 Highlanders' report had been contradicted by Brigadier Weeks, there was too much evidence from too many quarters to permit an outright dismissal of the training problem. Why did Ralston not discuss the training problem with the government? It appears that the Defence Minister had been hamstrung by the political volatility of the issue. It was, perhaps, one thing to admit to the public that there was a shortage of reinforcements. It was quite another to admit that the government had been sending inadequately trained men into battle.(3) The furore which had been created over Smythe's statement in September was evidence

(1) Spry Interview, 16 May 1985.

(2) Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, p. 231.

(3) The Whitakers called this "political suicide". Denis and Shelagh Whitaker, p. 233.

enough of the political damage such an admission could make.

Where did Ralston's loyalties lie? He had recommended conscription, knowing full well that such a measure could harm the nation's unity. But as he told the Prime Minister in November, "It seemed obvious that some measure of difference or disunity could not be avoided whatever course was taken. What weighed so heavily with me in the stand I have taken were our pledges to our fighting men and indirectly to their families." (1) Conscription, to Ralston, was necessary. More than this, it was necessary immediately. "We need men - trained infantry men (his) - and...we need them now... Our present necessity is a Canadian [his emphasis] necessity." (2) By recommending conscription, Ralston had acted according to the dictates of his office as Defence Minister. By not making the training issue public, he was fulfilling another, perhaps unwritten obligation, namely, he was trying to deflect controversy. As he said to a friend after he had left politics:

...I really don't think it would have been possible (judging by the difficulty I had in unstopping deaf ears even after my personal examination on the ground) to have convinced anybody of the need to sending NRMA men on any statistics [his emphasis] which might have been furnished at long range by C.M.H.Q...It wasn't a military matter alone. It was one of political and military

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 84, "Resignation", Ralston to King, 6 November 1944.

(2) Ibid. Vol. 84, "Draft Statement to the House"; Montréal, 20 November 1944. Note that Ralston emphasizes the shortage of trained infantry men.

administration combined. ...any article which leaves out of account the stalwarts in the Cabinet fortress and the force of public opinion doesn't do itself or the factors which brought about the back-sommersault (or is it summersault) justice, to say the least.(1)

The force of public opinion and the weight of politics in military matters were well known to Ralston. They could not be ignored.

The Prime Minister was certainly concerned about the training issue's impact on the political context. Although King's diary makes no mention of Smythe's statement,(2) he was sufficiently worried when Premier Drew of Ontario issued his own statements on the training situation to send an urgent cable to Ralston.(3) Nowhere in this cable is there evidence that King was concerned about the Army's predicament.

The impression Drew is seeking to create is that untrained reinforcements have been sent into action because there is a shortage of men overseas with adequate training while adequately trained men are being kept in Canada because they have not volunteered for general service. To meet Drew's point I believe the public must be assured that reinforcements are available in adequate numbers and have been available long enough to have time to receive proper training ...It

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- (1) Ibid. Vol. 86, "Resignation, Vining, Charles Correspondence", Ralston to Vining, 17 December 1944.
- (2) Stacey, p. 441 and Public Archives of Canada (PAC) William Lyon Mackenzie King Diary, MG26, J13, September 1944.
- (3) Pickersgill and Forster, p. 122. For illustrations of the attacks by the press, see: the Toronto Evening Telegram, 19 September and 4 October 1944; the Toronto Globe and Mail, 21 and 22 September and 7 October 1944; the Ottawa Journal, 20 and 21 September 1944; the Ottawa Citizen, 22 September 1944; and the Montreal Gazette, 19 and 20 September 1944.

is, I believe, of the greatest urgency that the present campaign should not continue unchecked and that you should take the earliest opportunity to make an authoritative statement.(1)

Ralston made such a statement that day(2) demonstrating that he was just as convinced as the Prime Minister of the need to play down the training issue. In an interview in Brussels, he said:

One of the first things I did on arriving in Italy was to see the Commanders of the Reinforcement Depots, and I also visited the Forward Reinforcement Unit. I discussed the system of training, and to me it appeared to be good training. ...I got some individual cases where it was claimed that certain men had not come up to the standard, and among thousands of men, that is possible. Additional steps have already been taken to correct it and I am convinced that such cases are very exceptional.(3)

This is hardly the picture which had been painted for Ralston by the Army commanders. As a Canadian Cabinet Minister, Ralston had to reassure Canadians that all was well. At the same time, however, it was also important to Ralston to address the military crisis in the Canadian Army. This is only reasoned speculation, but by urgently requesting the Prime Minister to conscript the trained NRMA soldiers, Ralston probably believed that he could solve the problem which had been created by a shortage of trained

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 62, "Major Connie Smythe, September-October 1944", King to Ralston, No. 2203, 9 October 1944.

(2) it is doubtful that he did so in response to King's wire, given the time difference between Ottawa and London.

(3) Ibid. Vol. 63, "Fall 1944, Press and Radio Conferences", 9 October 1944.

infantry reinforcements.

The Canadian Army had been facing a severe crisis in the fall of 1944. Illustrating its intensity puts the whole conscription crisis into a different light from that which has been traditionally cast on the subject. There were many good reasons to send the trained reinforcements overseas as quickly as possible. But when the government did conscript 16,000 NRMA soldiers on 23 November, was it responding to the Army's crisis? Or, was it addressing the exigencies of national unity? The fact that the government allowed two months to pass between the time the nature of the crisis was revealed and the application of compulsion suggests that the latter was the case. King had not been at all concerned about the Army's problems, as his telegram to Ralston on 9 October shows. He was concerned lest the issue rock the boat. Furthermore, the government did not spend the two month interval weighing the implications for the Army's military effectiveness of the shortage of trained reinforcements. Instead, it was measuring the relative importance of conscription to the nation's political context. Reviewing the government's deliberations up to 23 November demonstrates this fully. It was only mildly concerned about the dwindling reinforcement pool, not concerned at all about the training problem, and very concerned that the disclosure of the Army's troubles to the public had created a political monster.

Until 22 November, Mackenzie King directed his considerable

energy towards preventing conscription. He had been told by Ralston on 18 October that the NRMA men should be sent overseas immediately. King believed more harm than good would result if compulsion were applied. The next day, the Chief of the General Staff (General J.C. Murchie) told King that "based on purely military considerations the best course would be to use the NRMA." (1) King ignored the advice of the military and that of his Defence Minister. On 24 October, Ralston told Cabinet that conscription was essential. King replied by telling Cabinet the war was almost over. Besides, the Canadians were hardly essential to winning the war: "It would be terrible to divide the country in the moment of victory, particularly as it was the Army that had made the errors." (2) On the 27th, the War Committee was told that among 210,000 General Service men in Canada and England, not many more than 15,000 could be found as suitable infantry reinforcements. (3) Ralston, backed by Angus Macdonald and the Ministers of National Revenue (Colin Gibson) Mines (T.A. Crerar) and Finance (Ilsley) insisted on conscription.

As the issue grew in intensity, it became apparent to King that Ralston, the proponent of conscription, "would have to

(1) Granatstein and Hitsman, p. 215.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid. pp. 216-217.

resign if the government was to live." (1) General McNaughton was appointed Minister of National Defence after Ralston left on 1 November and until the 20th, the former Army Commander tried to convert the Zombies into volunteers. (2) On 20 November, McNaughton told King he had failed to convert the requisite number of troops and on the 23rd, King passed an order-in-council authorizing the despatch of 16,000 NRMA soldiers overseas. (3)

Since 1935, King had shaped his defence policies in order to keep Canada on the path of least resistance. It seems that by November 1944, the best policy, in terms of national unity, had become conscription. Before Ralston had resigned, editorial demand for overseas conscription had intensified in the English press. (4) Pressure for conscription from King's English-speaking Cabinet ministers had also escalated. (5) General McNaughton, whom King trusted implicitly, had been unable to make the voluntary system meet the Army's manpower requirements. As King

(1) Ibid. p. 218. This seems very naive since Ralston was not really the problem. Then again, King was not concerned about the Army except inasmuch as it was threatening the nation, so to him, firing Ralston was probably logical.

(2) This suggestion, said Ralston, "involved delays which I considered would be serious if the appeal was not successful." PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 84, "Resignation", Ralston to King, 1 November 1944.

(3) Pickersgill and Forster, pp. 192-234.

(4) PAC, King Papers, Vol. 427, "War Committee Memoranda, October-December 1944", Wartime Information Board Survey No. 44, 4 November 1944.

(5) Granatstein and Hitsman, pp. 228-230.

confided to his diary, a "situation of civil war in Canada would be more likely to arise than would even be the case were we to attempt to enforce conscription." (1) Canada's domestic stability could be better served by invoking conscription. The move would settle the Cabinet, it would placate the military, and it would satisfy English Canadians. Since Quebec's opposition seems to have been short-lived, conscription was the least offensive option for the majority of Canadians. (2)

If King had been responding to the military crisis, doubtless he would not have acted so slowly. Nor would he have fired Ralston. King seems instead to have worked to diffuse the furore that the revelation of the crisis in Europe had created. Only fast action by the government would have helped the Army. Since all of King's moves were directed towards avoiding compulsion, it is difficult to conclude that conscription was applied in order to resolve the Canadian Army's crisis in the fall of 1944. The NRMA soldiers helped to replenish the dwindling reinforcement pool, but they arrived far too late to ease the Army's crisis late in 1944. As Stacey notes, "the actual shortage in units [his emphasis] had been overcome before

(1) PAC, King Diary, 22 November 1944.

(2) Granatstein and Hitsman, pp. 235-236; King could not have known Quebec would accept conscription without too much protest but he did know that with key French-Canadian Cabinet ministers on his side, the trouble might lack force.

the decision was taken to send NRMA soldiers overseas."(1) By November, the Canadian Army's six month stretch of intense fighting from Normandy to the Scheldt Estuary had come to a close. Apart from raids and patrols, the Canadians would not see action again until February and March 1945. Then, the 2nd Corps would fight in the Battle of the Rhineland.

There was a military advantage to conscription, even if the government had been late in coming to its application. The reinforcement pool had been bolstered, and had the war not ended when it did, those reinforcements would have been needed.(2) As a veteran who wrote to Ralston in November said, conscription was "better late than never."(3) But the government's response to the Army's crisis showed the full extent of its preoccupation with national unity. Nothing - not international tension, not war, and not a crisis in its own Army - could dislodge its preeminence.

The government's application of compulsion was not a radical departure from its previous military policies. Certainly, King had spent the years between 1935 and 1944 swearing that he would never invoke conscription. He had done so because he believed it

(1) Stacey, p. 481. No mention is made of whether the training situation had improved, which is not surprising since Stacey does not acknowledge that such a problem existed.

(2) Stacey, p. 482. As Stacey says, no one could have predicted the end of the war (although Stuart had tried).

(3) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 84, "Resignation, Letters Exchanged", Anonymous veteran to Ralston, 22 November 1944.

would pose an enormous threat to Canadian unity. Until November 1944, he was understandably reticent to impose it on the nation. Then, King authorized conscription because it had become important to the Canadian political context to make a greater commitment to the Army. He had always shaped his defence policies by assessing the relative importance of the military to the nation's stability. By invoking conscription, King was just being consistent.

Conclusion

Between 1935 and 1944 Canada's military policies had been designed to prevent the military from becoming a politically divisive force. The King government's preoccupation with Canadian unity reflected its appreciation of the hazards of the political union, not the least of which stemmed from its cultural duality. Since the Boer War, successive Canadian governments had recognized that military contributions to Imperial wars had the potential to incur severe racial divisions. This potential was realized in 1917 when Borden imposed conscription, forcing French Canadians to fight for Britain. The lesson for future Prime Ministers was very clear. Major national decisions would have to reflect a consensus on the nation's interests. Alienating Quebec had had serious consequences for the nation's stability in 1917.

By 1935, the nation's interests had become increasingly difficult to define. Canadian autonomy from Britain was now a recognized and necessary feature of the Canadian fabric. For King, autonomy, or at least the appearance of autonomy, was a prerequisite for any external commitment because it had become the vehicle for national consensus. Consensus secured unity. The military still retained its potential to divide, indeed autonomy had accentuated this. Military activity, therefore, had to be for Canada's sake - not for Great Britain's. Thus the nation's interests had to be reflected in its military policies.

But Canada's geographic isolation and her strong ties to Britain (notwithstanding her autonomy) raised questions over the interest which military activity would serve, making consensus difficult. Some Canadians (like Mackenzie King) believed that the intangible bond with Britain was an acceptable - even necessary - facet of the Canadian persona, provided it did not interfere with the nation's right to self-government. Others (like many French Canadians) rejected those ties and loathed their implications.

The escalation of international tension in the 1930's and the outbreak of war presupposed military activity. Incumbent on the Prime Minister was the demonstration that military commitments would serve Canada and not detract from her autonomy. Defence preparations before the war would enhance the nation's security. Canada's war effort would be self-directed and it would represent Canadian interests, as defined by the myriad domestic pressures which emanated from the public sector. The war effort would serve the interests of industrialists, businessmen and farmers, English, French and immigrant Canadians, soldiers and civilians alike. The essence of the war effort became compromise. There would be substantial industrial mobilization. So too would there be a large military commitment. Whoever wished to serve overseas could do so, provided they were physically fit. Those who wanted to stay at home could find work in the factories, if they were not needed for home defence. Farmers could plough their fields, fortunes could be made, and lives could proceed along fairly normal lines. These were a lot

of interests to serve, and the government had to keep abreast of them all. By doing so, Canadian unity 'would' be protected, and unity would be actively protected since it could not be taken for granted.

The government's preoccupation with national unity subordinated the military to the political context. Political pressures determined the priority the government was willing to give to the military. Since these pressures fluctuated, so did the relative importance of the military to the political context. Flexibility, therefore, was essential so that defence policies could reflect the nation's many moods. Before the war, the King Government had promised there would be no conscription. It further calmed Canadians by expressing doubts that an expeditionary force would be needed if war erupted. Canada would have a policy of home defence, however, in order to meet responsibilities for the nation's security. Truly, this defence policy satisfied all quarters.

When war broke out, the nation's temper changed. Public pressure to assist Great Britain mounted. National unity required the government to meet that sentiment by despatching an expeditionary force overseas. There still would be no conscription and Quebec was appeased. Industrial production was made a priority because it was an inoffensive - and economically rewarding - symbol of commitment to the war. But as the war escalated, the military became more important to the political

context. By 1942, Canada had conscription for home defence and an Army in Europe, as well as a substantial industrial output. By 1944, the reinforcement problem led many Canadians to demand an even greater commitment to the Army. 16,000 NRMA soldiers were thus conscripted for overseas service. The 'unmilitary community' had come a long way since 1935. The government's defence policies had been flexible enough to meet the public's demands. This was the greatest advantage of its preoccupation with national unity.

Between 1935 and 1944, the government, in its commitment to the Army, had been careful not to exceed the bounds of the public's tolerance. Its objective was to prevent the military from becoming a politically divisive force. The Army had to exist, therefore, as an expression of the government's commitment to Canadian stability. The Army could serve a purpose, by bolstering national prestige. In fact, Canada's contribution to the general war effort should, as far as King and the Department of External Affairs were concerned, have earned the country a measure of influence on the international stage which was proportionate to that contribution. This was the 'functional argument' which King developed in 1943 as "an answer to the problems of the 'middle powers' like Canada, in connection with postwar international organization.(1) On the other hand, no one

(1) C.P. Stacey, Canada and the Age of Conflict, Vol. 2 1921-1948, The Mackenzie King Era (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981) pp. 332-333.

believed that the Canadian Army was essential to winning the war, and few believed that its military effectiveness was more important than domestic political considerations. An army was required as a political tool, in order for Canada to survive the war with her unity intact and her international influence enhanced. These were the crucial factors in the government's sanction of the Army's development.

As far as the generals were concerned, their political subordination had several disadvantages. Their leaders' professionalism was undermined. Political interference led to military decisions which were inimical to the Army's effectiveness as a fighting force. And, as a recent evaluation of the conscription crisis has shown, when the Army faced a severe crisis, the government gave it assistance only after the public demanded that it should. As it was, the help came too late.

A serious effect which the government's absorption with national unity had on the conduct of civil-military relations was the tension it produced between and among the military and political leaders. The government's focus on cultural harmony had made it sensitive to the risks which military activity posed. There was no consensus, however, on the degree of risk that the Army posed to national unity. National unity was an aspiration, a kind of shibboleth which was difficult to define. Military activity posed a problem, but the way in which that problem was

defined depended on the priorities of the key individuals (Mackenzie King, Ralston and McNaughton) involved. All three valued unity, but they had different interpretations of the importance of the Army in the political context. The way in which this importance was judged determined how these men would respond to a crisis - and to each other.

To General McNaughton, the Army was a nation-building force. He was sensitive to the threats to Canada's political union, and he understood that there were aspects of military activity which would not be tolerated in Canada. Conscription was one such issue, and a poorly led or unwisely disposed army were others. All would have serious consequences for the nation. Still, like many other soldiers, he believed Canadian autonomy had been won on the battlefields of the First World War. The Second World War was an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate that autonomy, and to build up her status in the international arena. McNaughton believed in concrete demonstrations of these ideals. He often expressed his concern at "Canada's lack of an effective voice in the political direction of the war"⁽¹⁾ and his efforts to entrench Canadian control of her armed forces practically cost him his military career. McNaughton was impatient with any force which impeded opportunities for the nation's self-expression, whether those forces were political interference from the

(1) Public Archives of Canada (PAC) General A.G.L. McNaughton Papers, MG30, E133, Vol. 182, "PA 5-3-1, Vol. 2", Conversation between General McNaughton, J.L. Ralston, and General Stuart, 2 August 1943.

Canadian government, or constitutional infractions by the British High Command.

J.L. Ralston was less concerned than McNaughton about Canadian status or autonomy, because he seems to have been a less idealistic man. He did believe, like McNaughton, that an army was an appropriate expression of Canada's nationhood. In order for such expressions to mean something, however, the Canadian public had to understand and respond to them in a positive way. There was no point to having an army if it did not fight battles. The Army's static role had made Canadians apathetic, and thus Ralston pushed very hard to get it into action. The characteristic which shaped most of Ralston's thinking was his single-minded absorption into whatever job he undertook. As Finance Minister, his over-riding concern had been the nation's economy. As Minister of National Defence, his job was "to give the Army the backing which its importance as well as its efficiency and spirit deserve[d]." (1) The Army was important to Ralston because it was his responsibility. He was a politician and thus was alert to the hazards of division; but since a political commitment had been made to the Army, it deserved the government's full support. In return, the Army would serve the ends of the government.

Mackenzie King, of course, had a total commitment to the

(1) PAC, Ralston Papers, Vol. 4, "Correspondence to son Stuart Ralston, 1942", Ralston to Stuart Ralston, 2 November 1942.

domestic scene, and to the viability of his government. If Canadians had not wanted an expeditionary force in 1939, none would have been sent. Since they did, it was up to King to make sure the government's military commitment enhanced the political context. Once saddled with an expeditionary force, King was prepared to reap international as well as domestic benefits from it. International prestige had long been considered a building block of national unity. On occasion, King was willing to rely on facade in order to improve Canada's status, because he was a shrewd politician. As far as he was concerned, however, the Army had to enhance the nation in terms, it seems, of what it represented rather than what it could achieve militarily.

These three men were vitally important to the war effort. It was not surprising that, eventually, their views would become irreconcilable. A concern with national unity had placed the Army firmly within the political context, but there were times during the war when it was felt that the Army should have come first. This was the poverty of national unity as a determinant of military policy, for at no time, unless a majority of Canadians could agree, would the Army's requirements ever be permitted to over-ride political needs. For McNaughton, the crisis came when the government decided to divide the Army. McNaughton could not agree that domestic pressure should undermine his Army's operational control and its fighting effectiveness. For Ralston, the time when the Army's needs should have come first was during its reinforcement crisis. But

King, as Prime Minister, never granted such a priority to the Army. Both Ralston and McNaughton had been indispensable to King for the greater part of the war. Both outlived their usefulness when they tried to put the Army ahead of domestic concerns. As far as Mackenzie King was concerned, nothing was more important than national unity.

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