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1763-1871

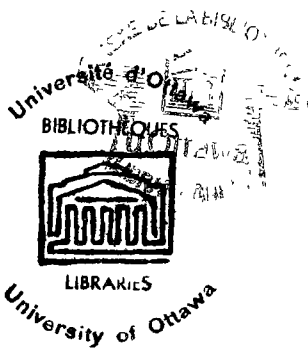
A STUDY OF BRITISH STRATEGY

by J. Mackay Hitsman

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

J. Mackay Hitsman was born on April 19, 1917 in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History from Queen's University at Kingston in 1939. He received the Master of Arts degree in History from Queen's University in 1940. The title of his thesis was Canadian Naval Policy. He became a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in 1960.

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ABBREVIATIONS

used in footnotes:

Adm.	- Admiralty Papers
C.	- British Military Records
C.O.	- Colonial Office Papers
E.	- Executive Council Minutes
G.	- Governor General's Papers
N.A.	- National Archives, Washington, U.S.A.
P.A.C.	- Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa
P.R.O.	- Public Record Office, London
W.O.	- War Office Papers

## INTRODUCTION

How the British conquered Canada is an essential introduction to this study of their subsequent strategy for defending it against any possible aggressor; that is, until November 11, 1871, when the last infantry battalion of regular troops vacated Quebec City. Quite appropriately this battalion belonged to the 60th (The King's Royal Rifle Corps), which had been raised during the Seven Years' War for service in North America and had fought on the Plains of Abraham.

As early as 1664, conquest of the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, which was renamed New York, had given the subjects of King Charles II control over the whole Atlantic Coast from Virginia to the region known both as Nova Scotia and Acadia. Here, however, sovereignty was disputed with the French King Louis XIV, whose subjects were maintaining several isolated settlements. They were separated from the 2500 French colonists in the New France of the lower St. Lawrence Valley by miles of wooded wilderness and by a low range of mountains, which were crossed only by occasional couriers during the winter months.

New France had become a royal colony a year earlier and placed under the administration of the Ministère de la Marine. French Army regulars, or Troupes de Terre of the

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Ministère de la Guerre, were soon posted there temporarily to put an end to the menace posed by the Iroquois Indians of the Five Nations. When this had been accomplished, the Troupes de Terre were withdrawn and garrison duty was left to small independent companies recruited for permanent service in New France. Subsequently these companies became known as Troupes de la Marine.

French explorers and fur traders began pushing farther into the heart of the continent, via the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. By portaging their canoes or bateaux around rapids and waterfalls, and by carrying them short distances overland, it was possible to reach other rivers leading to the Gulf of Mexico. Soon France claimed sovereignty over the entire Ohio and Mississippi Valleys by reason of prior discovery.

This was disputed by the American colonists who had been handicapped in their efforts to expand westward by the Appalachian Mountains. This barrier, which limited easy settlement to the comparatively narrow coastal plain and forced the venturesome to travel westward on foot, with supplies on their backs or pack-horses, was broken only by two narrow corridors. Both of these were in the colony or province of New York. They ran north and west respectively

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from Albany, the furthest point to which ocean-going sailing ships could ascend the Hudson River. Travellers to the north could portage from the upper Hudson successively to Lakes George and Champlain. The last named emptied into the Richelieu River, which entered the St. Lawrence River at the Seigniory of Sorel, about 45 miles below Montréal. West from Albany was a canoe and portage route along the Mohawk River, Wood Creek, Lake Oneida and Oswego River to the eastern end of Lake Ontario. This, however, was in the territory of the Five Nations, who insisted on acting as "middlemen" for the prosperous fur trade.

Their renewed attacks on New France proved too much for the Marquis de Denonville to combat, without help from France. He suggested retaliation against the American colonists who were supplying the Iroquois with muskets and ammunition, and this seemed feasible following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1689. The Governor of New France was authorized to lead an expedition along the Lake Champlain-Lake George-Hudson River route to Albany; after capturing it he was to continue down river against the port of New York, which would be attacked at the same time by a French fleet. Yet French resources were not to be sufficient for a new Governor, the elderly Comte de Frontenac, to make such an attempt which, if successful, would have separated

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New England from the rest of the American Colonies.<sup>1</sup> The best he could do was to send strong raiding parties against the more exposed settlements of New York and New England during the winter of 1690. Tactically these hit-and-run raids were excellent examples of la petite guerre, or guerrilla warfare, but the resulting massacre of defenceless women and children at Schenectady, Salmon Falls and Casco Bay aroused the people of New York and the separate New England colonies to demand action.

Since the only redcoated regulars in North America were ineffectual garrison companies in New York, and the Royal Navy was busy contesting control of the English Channel with a France that was trying to restore King James II to his throne, the dis-united American colonists had to act on their own. The courses open to this makeshift coalition, as well as to its enemy in New France, were governed by realization of what the great American naval historian, Rear-Admiral A.T. Mahan, would one day summarize in the following words:

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1. W. J. Eccles, Frontenac: The Courtier Governor, Toronto, McClelland & Stewart Limited, 1959, pp. 200-202.

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The strength of Canada against attack by land lay in its remoteness, in the wilderness to be traversed before it was reached, and in the strength of the line of the St. Lawrence, with the fortified posts of Montreal and Quebec on its northern bank. The wilderness, it is true, interposed its passive resistance to attacks from Canada as well as to attacks upon it; but when it had been traversed, there were to the southward no such strong natural positions confronting the assailant. Attacks from the south fell upon the front, or at best upon the flank, of the line of the St. Lawrence. Attacks from Canada took New York and its dependencies in the rear.<sup>2</sup>

The principal American effort was to be the capture of Quebec by a makeshift fleet and army commanded by colonial-born Sir William Phips, who had already and easily captured Port Royal on the Bay of Fundy. Phips successfully navigated the St. Lawrence River but, after Frontenac refused to surrender Quebec, the New Englanders proved incapable of conducting a successful siege. The subsidiary and overland expedition aimed at Montreal got no farther than the head of Lake Champlain.

In 1710 Port Royal was again easily captured by an expedition from New England. The two-pronged attack

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2. A.T. Mahan, The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence, London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd., 1913, pp. 7-8.

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planned for the following year against Quebec and Montreal, however, was a complete fiasco. A considerable part of the British fleet and army now provided was lost by shipwreck off Isle-aux-Oeufs in the lower St. Lawrence River, while once again the purely American overland expedition was halted at Lake Champlain. Elsewhere this War of the Spanish Succession was more favourable to British arms, so Queen Anne retained undisputed possession of Acadia (or Nova Scotia) by the Treaty signed at Utrecht in 1713. France also recognized her sovereignty over Hudson's Bay and Newfoundland.

Port Royal had served as a French base for the privateers that preyed on New England fishing vessels. As Annapolis Royal, however, it possessed little strength and its tiny garrison of British regulars was to do little more than conduct an ineffectual rule over the Acadians who chose to remain on their farms. A much more serious matter for France was expulsion from Newfoundland, since that island dominated the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

French seaborne activities were transferred to the continuing Isle Royale (later Cape Breton), where the fortress of Louisbourg was built in another effort to dominate the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Louisbourg was,

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however, to prove to be only as strong as the limited range of its fortress guns, unless a strong French fleet was based on its harbour.<sup>3</sup> Thus it surrendered on June 15, 1745 to a nondescript force of New Englanders who had been besieging it for six weeks, supported by a small squadron of the Royal Navy from its West Indian Station. When Louisbourg was returned to France by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the British Government decided to establish a town and naval base on the Atlantic coast of the Nova Scotian peninsula, where there was a far better harbour. This was commenced in 1749 and named Halifax.

Britain could now lay claim to being mistress of the seas, even though during this last War of the Austrian Succession naval supremacy had been maintained "rather by the weakness of her enemies than by her own disciplined strength".<sup>4</sup> Seafaring was just as natural to Frenchmen

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3. Gerald S. Graham, Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1950, p. 120.

4. Captain A.T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1903, p. 269.

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as Englishmen, but the former were repeatedly drawn into European quarrels because of France's long interior frontiers, whereas Britain was surrounded by salt water and dependant completely on sea power for home defence.<sup>5</sup> The French Navy was always divided between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic; in each successive war, every projected descent upon the British Isles depended on the junction of the fleets from Toulon and Brest.<sup>6</sup> Now that the Royal Navy was able to maintain a permanent fleet in the Mediterranean, as well as in the English Channel, its battle ships of the line could attempt the close blockade of all major French ports.<sup>7</sup>

Unfortunately for France's colonial empire, the ministers of Louis XV allowed him to become involved in another European quarrel in 1756, a year after undeclared

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5. Graham, Empire of the North Atlantic, op. cit., p. 40.

6. Ibid., p. 33.

7. Captain S.W. Roskill, The Strategy of Sea Power: Its Development and Application, London, Collins, 1962, pp. 47-49.

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war had erupted in North America over possession of the interior and Anglo-American expeditions had been sent against three widely separated French forts.<sup>8</sup> Leaving Frederick the Great of Prussia and lesser European allies to hold off the might of France with British gold and the help of a small army of redcoats, Great Britain directed its principal military effort to capturing the French overseas empire; whereas the French reinforced the 42 companies of Troupes de la Marine in North America by the despatch of only eight battalions of Troupes de Terre to Quebec and four to Louisbourg.

North American tradition has emphasized the wrong lessons from Major-General Edward Braddock's defeat near Fort Duquesne in 1775 and thus obscured the fact that the decisive campaigns of the final Anglo-French struggle for North America were waged according to European practice by armies consisting largely of regular troops.<sup>9</sup> "La constitution de la guerre dans cette colonie

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8. Max Savelle, The Diplomatic History of the Canadian Boundary, 1749-1763, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1940.

9. Stanley Pargellis (ed.), Military Affairs in North America, 1748-1765. Selected Documents from the Cumberland Papers in Windsor Castle, New York, D. Appleton-Century, 1936, p. xv.

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a changé totalement", the Marquis de Montcalm, commanding the Troupes de Terre in Canada, was to write. "Jadis les Canadiens croyoient la faire, c'étoient des courses ressemblant à des parties de chasse, aujourd'huy entreprises suivies, jadis les Sauvages en faisoient le fond, aujourd'huy l'accessoire. Il faut donc d'autres vues, d'autres maximes. Je le dis mais les anciens prejuges subsistent".<sup>10</sup>

Many of the poorly disciplined American provincial troops came from long settled communities, had never seen Indians in war paint, and knew nothing of forest skirmishing. Being ill-trained, they were no match for French regulars in the open. On the other hand, the self-disciplined backwoodsmen serving in ranger companies were invaluable and successive British commanders were glad to maintain them from the military chest. Regulars were encouraged to go out with rangers and Indians and learn their ways for, Major-General Lord Loudon reported as early as August 20, 1756, "till we have every thing necessary, for carrying on the War here, within ourselves, Independent

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10. P.A.C., C 11 A, Montcalm to Le Normand, April 12, 1759.

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of Aid from this Country; we shall go on very slowly".<sup>11</sup>  
 One result was the addition of a light infantry company to each regular battalion serving in North America and the recruitment locally of a new 80th Regiment of Foot (Light Armed).

The Marquis de Montcalm had more success with the Canadian militia. Although these farmers selected by ballot (or lot) to fill local quotas for compulsory and unpaid service lacked formal military training of a European nature, their civilian way of life ideally fitted them for the most necessary duty of being military pioneers - transporting supplies by canoe or bateau and building roads and fortifications. They transported his force to Oswego in 1756 and to Fort William Henry in 1757, and helped with the successful sieges which delayed the British from renewing the offensive in the inland theatre of operations until 1758. During the first week of July in that year the Canadian militia felled trees to strengthen the outer defences of Ticonderoga with log breastworks and abattis. Then they added the fire of their muskets

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<sup>11</sup>. Pargellis, Military Affairs in North America, op. cit., p. 223.

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to that of the 3,600 Troupes de Terre to repulse Major-General James Abercrombie's much larger assaulting force of 6,300 British regulars and 5,900 American provincials. Montcalm had only 591 militia and Troupes de la Marine with him, however, and was careful to explain in his Journal why he had been unable to secure a greater number of the former:

Premièrement, on commande un certain nombre d'habitants de la meilleure espèce, pour aller à la guerre; on les écrit, sur les rôles; on les équipe en conséquence. Les voilà prêts à partir; alors on leur offre le choix, ou de s'engager à un très bas prix pour aller à la mer d'Ouest, à la baie, etc... ou de "marcher au feu": c'est le terme dont se sert ici et qu'on trouve fort expressif. Leur choix n'est ni long, ni douteux. Ils s'engagent pour les postes et l'on dit qu'ils son à la guerre, les rôles en font foi.

Deuxièmement, le munitionnaire a besoin de monde et même en grande quantité pour ses transports. Au lieu d'avoir évalué le nombre nécessaire, de l'avoir tiré de la totalité des milice et engagé pour toute la campagne, on commande des miliciens pour la guerre; on les met sur les rôles de l'armée; ensuite on les exemote d'y aller, à condition qu'ils feront gratis deux ou trois voyages pour le munitionnaire. De là s'ensuit que l'armée parôit nombreuse et qu'il n'y marche réellement que la plus mauvaise espèce d'hommes et que les paroisses sont foulées.<sup>12</sup>

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12. L'abbé H.-R. Casgrain (ed.), Journal du Marquis de Montcalm durant ses campagnes en Canada de 1756 à 1759, Quebec, Demers et frère, 1895, pp. 421-422.

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Less than three weeks after Montcalm's defensive victory at Ticonderoga, which ended for at least a year the British attempt to move down the Lake Champlain route towards Montreal, the French fortress of distant Louisbourg was forced to surrender to the expedition headed by Major-General Jeffrey Amherst and Admiral Hon. Edward Boscawen. Even though the Royal Navy had not possessed complete command of the North Atlantic, it had been considered that troops and stores could be safely moved to the assembly point of Halifax with a minimum of convoy protection, while the immediately available portion of the battle fleet could be despatched to Louisbourg, as soon as that port was deemed free of ice, in order to capture any French vessels that might elude the British blockade in European waters.<sup>13</sup> A total of 14 French ships did manage to evade the various blockading squadrons and get to Louisbourg before Boscawen's main fleet, but its presence subsequently prevented any possibility of succour. Once the British assault landing to the westward of Louisbourg had succeeded, it was only a matter of time until orthodox

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13. Julian S. Corbett, England in the Seven Years' War: A Study in Combined Strategy, London, Longmans, Green & Co., 1907, Vol. I, pp. 310-313.

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siege operations forced the French to surrender.<sup>14</sup> The third article of the capitulation provided for the surrender of the French garrison of Isle St. Jean.

The British Government's instructions to Major-General Amherst for 1759 were to move down Lake Champlain, with 4,000 regulars and about the same number of provincials, and threaten Montreal. Major-General James Wolfe was to attack Quebec with a separate army carried up the St. Lawrence River by a powerful fleet under the command of Vice-Admiral Charles Saunders. On the periphery, Brigadier-General John Prideaux was to re-occupy Oswego and capture Fort Niagara; this would give the British control of Lake Ontario, since Lieutenant-Colonel John Bradstreet had destroyed Fort Frontenac during the previous autumn.

News of the British expedition intended for Quebec reached Montreal about the middle of May. Montcalm had received only 400 reinforcements for his eight battalions of Troupes de Terre, and a few artillerymen. Thus he would

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14. J. Mackay Hitsman with C.C.J. Bond, "The Assault Landing at Louisbourg, 1758", Canadian Historical Review, XXXV (December, 1954).

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have to stave off defeat in North America as best he could until such time as French victories in Europe might lead to a peace conference. Therefore Montcalm took a calculated risk and left only three battalions of Troupes de Terre and eight companies of Troupes de la Marine, with some militia and four armed sailing vessels, on Lake Champlain. These were to abandon Ticonderoga as soon as it should be seriously threatened, but make a stand at Isle-aux-Noix. The balance of the Troupes de Terre and Troups de la Marine, about 1,500 sailors, and nearly 12,000 militia and Indians were soon concentrated in and around Quebec City. It, however, was not a fortress: the walls were neither well designed nor well made; they lacked counterguards to protect them from the direct fire of a besieger's cannon; there were no proper ditches (with counterscarp and glacis) to slow down assaulting troops; and enemy batteries could be erected on high ground which overlooked them. Therefore Montcalm disposed the bulk of his regulars and militia behind field works to the east of the city, where an assault landing seemed most likely, and sent only a small force above the city to interfere with any possible attempt to land higher up the St. Lawrence River.

On June 27 Major-General James Wolfe's troops began landing on the Isle d'Orleans from Vice-Admiral Saunders'

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ships. Except for six companies of rangers, and 300 provincials who arrived later to serve as pioneers, Wolfe's 8,500 troops were British regulars. Yet Wolfe was no more successful than Sir William Phips had been in 1690, apart from damaging the city by bombardment from the guns he mounted across the St. Lawrence River on the heights of Levis, until he finally gambled and landed with 4,440 troops at the Anse au Foulon on September 13.<sup>15</sup> These quickly climbed the heights onto the Plains of Abraham.

When Montcalm learned that British troops were lined up on the Plains of Abraham - high ground that commanded sections of the city walls - he decided to attack before the whole of Wolfe's army could get there. So he advanced with his immediately available 4,500 men, about half of whom were militia. Much later Major-General Sir James Carmichael-Smyth, R.E. would write for the benefit of the Duke of Wellington:

...it would have been more advantageous to have profited of the near neighbourhood of the works of Quebec, and compelled General Wolfe to attack him behind them. The

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15. C.P. Stacey, Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle, Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1959.

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defences of Quebec were not so strong as respectable field-works. They were not, however, to be taken by assault, defended by such good troops as were under Montcalm's orders; nor had the English general such a superiority of regular regiments as to have justified his making the attempt. To have established batteries, and to have broke ground, would have been an operation requiring considerable time and labour. The season was slipping away rapidly, and the French had everything to gain from delay. It is also to be observed Montcalm had a corps of about 2,000 men in the rear of the British army... being employed to prevent any disembarkation at the mouth of the Jacques Cartier River, or at Pointe-aux-Trembles. This detachment would have harassed the British army, and impeded their communications had they been obliged to remain before Quebec and to commence regular operations. 16

As it was, however, devastating volleys of British musketry halted the French advance across the Plains of Abraham. In a matter of minutes a mortally wounded Montcalm and his men were hurrying from the battlefield. The whole French field force shortly retreated up river by a circuitous route, while the victorious British remained on the battlefield where their own commander lay dead. By September 18, when the Chevalier de Lévis had rallied the French and started them back to the relief of the garrison within Quebec, its

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16. Sir James Carmichael (ed.), Precis of the Wars in Canada, from 1755 to the Treaty of Ghent in 1814. With Political and Military Reflections. By the late Maj.-Gen. Sir James Carmichael-Smyth, London, Tinsley Brothers, 1862, pp. 80-81.

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commander had arranged to surrender and did. Thereupon the French retreated again and went into winter quarters; the British fleet soon sailed away, leaving Brigadier-General Hon. James Murray with a sizable garrison to hold Quebec.

Meanwhile Major-General Amherst had achieved very little. The French had abandoned Ticonderoga on his approach and blown up Fort St. Frederic at Crown Point when he continued his advance. When Amherst reached there on August 4, he learned that the French had surrendered Fort Niagara. Being a cautious soldier, Amherst refused to advance further down Lake Champlain until he had acquired enough of a navy to destroy the four tiny French war vessels, which otherwise might have blown to bits his troop-laden bateaux. By the time all was ready, it was September 11. On his approach two of the four French war vessels were sunk by their crews; a third ran aground and the fourth escaped down the Richelieu River to Isle-aux-Noix. This gave Amherst undisputed command of Lake Champlain. News that the British had captured Quebec persuaded Amherst that all French forces would now be concentrating in the Montreal area, so he decided not to

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venture farther until the spring of 1760.<sup>17</sup>

The French then moved down river from Montreal against Quebec with a force that included more regulars than Brigadier-General Murray had physically fit to do battle. Possibly hoping that superior British musketry would again bring victory, Murray led his troops outside the city to meet the French on April 28, 1760. The resulting Battle of Ste.-Foye was a victory for the French, however, and they commenced a close siege of Quebec. Only the arrival of a British warship from Halifax on May 9, and two more on May 15, persuaded them to raise the siege and retreat towards Montreal. Since the Royal Navy prevented any succour from France, it was only a matter of time before the French would have to surrender to British forces converging on Montreal - Brigadier-General Murray from Quebec with 2,450 regulars, Colonel William Haviland from Crown Point with 3,300 regulars and provincials, and Major-General Amherst with 10,000 regulars and provincials from Albany via Oswego and the St. Lawrence River. These separate forces moved carefully and ponderously, and it was early September before they neared the Island of Montreal.

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17. J. Clarence Webster (ed.), The Journal of Jeffrey Amherst. Recording the Military Career of General Amherst in America from 1758 to 1763, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1931.

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Since there were less than 3,900 Troupes de Terre and Troupes de la Marine remaining, and the Canadian militia were deserting in large numbers daily, the Governor General of Canada agreed to Articles of Capitulation on September 8, 1760.

Although most historians have been careful to emphasize the part played by the Royal Navy in the conquest of Quebec in 1759, and its retention in 1760, they have ignored the extremely pertinent comments later made by Major-General Sir James Carmichael-Smyth:

As General Amherst's operations were successful, hasty observers have taken it for granted they were judicious, and they have, in latter days, even been attempted to be imitated. They will not, however, stand the test of investigation, and the movement by Oswego, Lake Ontario, and the St. Lawrence may be pronounced to have been imprudent and unnecessary.

The distance from Albany to Oswego is one hundred and sixty miles; from Oswego, across Lake Ontario to the commencement of the St. Lawrence, there are sixty miles of water conveyance, and from the commencement of the St. Lawrence to Montreal a hundred and seventy-four additional miles of a very rapid and dangerous river, making a total distance of three hundred and ninety-four miles for the conveyance of the troops, as well as the provisions, ammunition, and stores they required. 18

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18. Carmichael-Smyth, Precis of the Wars in Canada, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

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Carmichael-Smyth emphasized the difficulty of descending the rapids between Oswegatchie and Lake St. Francis, the ease with which a small party of Indians could have interrupted this movement, the fact that Amherst's troops had to draw all their supplies from distant Oswego, and the possibility that complete disaster could have resulted had "the French opposed with spirit the advance of this corps." In his opinion, this long and dangerous flank movement was completely unnecessary and Amherst should have moved directly towards his objective:

From Crown Point to St. John's [then and now St. Jean], Lake Champlain offered every facility for the conveyance of the army destined to attack the French at Montreal. To such a force as General Amherst had with him, assisted by the heavy ordnance which, to any extent, he might have transported by water, Fort St. John could have offered but little resistance. From St. John to the right bank of the St. Lawrence, opposite to Montreal, he would only have had to have marched twenty-four miles. The river was certainly to be passed, but the French once driven back and confined to the island of Montreal, all the craft in the Richelieu River, from Chambly to Sorel, would have been at his command, and, moreover, he might have expected to have been joined at Sorel by General Murray's corps from Quebec, together with such boats and shipping as they must have brought with him. It appears to amount to a demonstration that General Amherst ought to have advanced with the body of his army by Lake Champlain.

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The French no longer had any bases on Lake Ontario and their hold on the upper St. Lawrence River was limited to La Galette in the Thousand Islands, where they had built two brigs following the destruction of Fort Frontenac, and a small fort on Isle Royale which was just below Oswegatchie (now Ogdensburg, N.Y.). Their capture, according to Carmichael-Smyth, should have been left to a brigade of provincial troops and a party of Indians led by someone like Lieutenant-Colonel Bradstreet.

Amherst soon removed his headquarters as Commander-in-Chief in North America to New York City. The troops in Canada became an army of occupation and the military governors of Quebec, Trois-Rivières and Montreal conscientiously followed the principle that the laws of a conquered territory remain in effect until expressly altered by a new sovereign. The Treaty of Paris signed on February 10, 1763 recognized the British conquest of all except the tiny fishing colony of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon. Since the Treaty permitted everyone wishing to retain French nationality a further 13 months in which to withdraw themselves and their possessions to France, the Canadians could not be properly considered British subjects until August 10, 1764.

## CHAPTER I

## AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY YEARS

The Seven Years' War had proved very costly to the British taxpayers so the Grenville Ministry decided that the colonists should be taxed to help maintain the considerable garrison of regular troops to be continued in North America. Successive attempts to tax the American colonists, however, met with impassioned cries of "no taxation without representation", accompanied by widespread passive disobedience and some rioting.

Most Americans conveniently ignored the British Army's role in suppressing Pontiac's Conspiracy because the scene of this police action was far distant from the long settled communities. Yet several of the colonies had furnished contingents. Even a small battalion of French-speaking Canadian volunteers served as pioneers and transportation troops with Colonel John Bradstreet's column during the campaigning season of 1764. A few armed schooners provided lake transportation. This last was a government monopoly, which was soon transferred from Admiralty control to that by the Quartermaster General's Department of the British Army and given the name Provincial Marine.

## AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY YEARS

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The Commander-in-Chief in North America, now Major-General Hon. Thomas Gage, had reasoned that "nothing can so effectually serve, to convince the savages how vain and erroneous, their expectations have been of French Supplies, and that the arms of Great Britain, have received additional Strength by the Conquest of Canada, than their seeing a Body of Canadians in Arms, and ready to act hostilely against them, in conjunction with British Troops".<sup>1</sup> The Military Governor of Montreal, Colonel Thomas Burton, thought that it was "too Early in the day, for raising Canadians to act Hostily against the Savages",<sup>2</sup> but both Colonel Frederic Haldimand at Trois-Rivières and Major-General Hon. James Murray at Quebec disagreed. Murray, who was soon destined to become the first Civil Governor of the whole province, thought the habitants should be encouraged to undertake a service for which they would be relatively well paid. According to his letter of March 5, 1764 to Major-General Gage:

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1. C.O. 42/25, Gage to Haldimand, Feb. 12, 1764.
  2. C.O. 42/25, Burton to Murray, March 2, 1764.

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These poor people have hardly yet had time to breathe; after a long uninterrupted Series of Misfortunes, they have flattered themselves, that under our Government, they would be exempted, at least, from the intolerable weight of Military Service under which they formerly groaned, hence an additional Necessity of making the service you require of them at present a Voluntary one, when put upon that footing, it will not be in the power of French Emissaries, Priests, or other disaffected persons, to turn the measure to their purposes, and thereby persuade many to leave the province who otherwise would not have thought of it....<sup>3</sup>

After some initial difficulty the required 300 men were recruited and command of the battalion was given to a former officer in the Troupes de la Marine. Service on the lines of communications proved to be physically arduous and the battalion did not return to Montreal until the last week in November. Yet Colonel Haldimand subsequently reported from Trois-Rivières: "Ces bonnes gens, qui n'avaient jamais reçu un traitement pareil sont très content et souhaitent qu'on aye besoin de leurs Services l'année prochaine".<sup>4</sup>

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3. C.O. 42/25, Murray to Gage, March 5, 1764.

4. P.A.C., Haldimand Papers B/2-2, Haldimand to Gage, Dec. 25, 1764.

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Almost two years would elapse, however, before Major-General Gage wrote Colonel Guy Carleton for an opinion as to whether the crumbling forts at Crown Point, Ticonderoga and the foot of Lake George need be rebuilt. Carleton had been Quartermaster General of Wolfe's army during the campaign of 1759 and had subsequently fought in the West Indies; since the summer of 1766 he had been governing the province of Quebec in place of Major-General Murray who was on leave of absence. On February 15, 1767 Carleton replied to Gage's letter in the affirmative. He further suggested the establishment of a munitions depot near New York City and the construction of a proper citadel at Quebec City, where nothing had been done to repair the damage done to inadequate fortifications by the sieges of 1759 and 1760.<sup>5</sup> Whether Carleton was aware of the earlier and abortive French plans to split the American Colonies in two by attacking down the Lake Champlain-Lake George-Hudson River route towards New York City, or whether he reached the same conclusion by independent reasoning, is immaterial. The result was the formulation of a plan that could be employed

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5. C.O. 42/27, Carleton to Gage, Feb. 15, 1767.

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to counter either a French threat in the St. Lawrence River or a rebellion by disgruntled American colonists. According to Carleton's plan a chain of fortified bases between Quebec and New York - at Crown Point, Ticonderoga, the foot of Lake George and up river from New York - would "facilitate the Transport of ten or fifteen thousand Men in the beginning of a War, from the one to the other, as the circumstances may require".<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Carleton's letter to Gage continued:

This Communication so established, will give Security to the King's Magazines, till then precarious, and doubtful who may avail themselves of them; will separate the Northern from the Southern Colonies, will afford an easy and advantageous opportunity of transporting his Forces into any Part of this Continent, and may prevent the greatest of all Inconveniences, Delay and Loss of Time in the beginning of a War.

Major-General Gage may have been impressed with Carleton's this line of reasoning, but the Treasury Board in far off London was in no mood to approve extra military expenditure in North America. Moreover, the Royal Navy had

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6. Ibid.

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established its superiority over the French and Spanish navies along the western seaboard of Europe during the recent Seven Years' War and therefore, despite the recent retrenchment imposed by the same Treasury Board, it should be able to intercept at the source any enemy threat to British colonial possessions at the start of a new conflict?<sup>7</sup> Colonel Carleton, however, persisted in putting forward his own views.

Carleton persuaded an officer of the Royal Engineers visiting Quebec to prepare a plan for a proper citadel. This he submitted with his despatch of November 25, 1767 to Lord Shelburne, who was the Secretary of State responsible for the colonies in North America. Carleton's letter reiterated that nothing had been done to repair the damage caused to Quebec's fortifications by the sieges of 1759 and 1760, while the flimsy walls at Montreal were falling into ruin. Carleton estimated that the English-speaking merchants who had flocked into the province might furnish 500 men experienced in bearing arms, "supposing them all willing",

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7. Herbert Rosinski, "The Role of Sea Power in Global Warfare of the Future," Brassey's Naval Annual, 1947, London, Wm. Clowes & Sons Ltd., 1947, p. 107.

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and capable of putting Quebec into a defensible state after two months of hard work.<sup>8</sup> His military establishment called for 1,600 British regulars, but actual strength was considerably less and he would have to call on the French-speaking Canadians in the event of an emergency. These, he believed, "could sent into the Field, about eighteen Thousand Men, well able to bear Arms; of which Number, above one half have already served, with as much Valor, with more Zeal, and more military knowledge for America, than the regular Troops of France, that were joined with them".<sup>9</sup>

Carleton was afraid, however, that the Canadian seigneurs, particularly former officers of the Troupes de la Marine still settled in the province, might be persuaded by agents from France to head a revolt in the event of another war between Britain and France. A possible long term solution was advanced in his despatch of January 20, 1768: organization of a few companies of Canadian Foot would provide employment as officers for a

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8. C.O. 42/28, Carleton to Shelburne, Nov. 25, 1767.

9. Ibid.

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number of the Canadian gentry and encourage them in the belief that their sons could have careers in the service of a British King.<sup>10</sup>

Carleton's despatch of November 20, 1768, addressed to Lord Hillsborough, now Secretary of State for the American Colonies, combined his fears of a war with France and of a rebellion within the American Colonies. If the French regained Quebec, they could actively assist the Americans win independence from the British Empire.<sup>11</sup>

Since nothing had been done about a citadel for Quebec, Carleton re-submitted his earlier plan of 1767 to Lord Hillsborough in a despatch dated May 9, 1769. His argument somewhat twisted earlier facts to fit his present purpose:

I have found it the general opinion of the Canadians, that if Admiral Durell had pushed up in May 1759, with only a small part of the Army [from Louisbourg], the Town might have been taken before the [French] Governor in Chief could

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10. Ibid., Jan. 20, 1768.

11. C.O. 42/28, Carleton to Hillsborough, Nov. 20, 1768.

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have sent them any Assistance from Montreal, where and in the upper Country all the Troops were collected to defend the Entrance by the Lakes; That after the Defeat of their Army upon the Plains of Abraham the 13th of September, altho' they had eight Battalions and forty Companies of regular Troops, with fifteen or sixteen thousand warlike Militia in the Field, after having had four months Time to strengthen the Town, They apprehended the same so indefensible that it surrendered immediately before one single Battery could be opened against it; and that if in the Succeeding year the remains of ten Brave [British] Battalions were enabled to hold out until the Arrival of our Fleet, it was in a great Degree due to Monsieur de Levis' Army being in want of Artillery and Ammunition. 12

During the summer of 1770 Carleton returned to England and remained there for nearly four years, assisting the British Government to draft a Quebec Act which it was hoped would expedite the conversion of French-speaking Canadians into loyal British subjects of King George III. Unfortunately Carleton's judgment seems to have been influenced by his association with members of the seigneurial class who told him what he wanted to believe: that Quebec had been a true feudal society, in which tenants had turned out under their overlords to repel both Indian and white aggressors.

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12. C.O. 42/29, Carleton to Hillsborough, May 9, 1769

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The possibility of raising one or two battalions of Canadian regulars was raised in the first letter written to Lieutenant-General Gage following Carleton's return to Quebec on September 18, 1774.<sup>13</sup> Here Carleton, now a major-general, had almost immediately received a letter from Gage stating that two of the five weak regiments of foot then garrisoning his province were required to augment the troops at troublesome Boston. Gage also wondered whether a body of Canadians and Indians might be raised for service against the dissident element in the American colonies, should the existing sparks of unrest be fanned into the flames of rebellion.<sup>14</sup> Carleton had little alternative but to agree that the 10th and 52nd Regiments would be sent to Boston, since ships had been despatched for their removal.

Carleton did become somewhat perturbed as the months passed, for his letter addressed to Gage on February 4, 1775 expressed the hope that a reinforcement of British regulars would be sent to Quebec as soon as navigation opened in the

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13. C.O. 42/33, Carleton to Gage, Sept. 20, 1774.

14. C.O. 42/33, Gage to Carleton, Sept. 4, 1774.

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spring.<sup>15</sup> Protest meetings were being held by the English-speaking minorities at Quebec and Montreal. When the Quebec Act would come into effect on May 1, 1775 these "old subjects" would lose all hope of securing an elected assembly. They also dreaded loss of their traditional rights of habeas corpus and trial by jury in civil suits. Revolutionary agents from the American Colonies fostered a rumour, which became widespread among the habitants, that the hitherto neglected militia would be drafted into the British Army for service in turbulent New England.<sup>16</sup>

Carleton conceded that the habitants would not now be "pleased at being suddenly, and without Preparation embodied into a Militia, and marched from their Families, Lands, and Habitations to remote Provinces, and all the Horrors of War, which they have already experienced".<sup>17</sup> Yet he persisted in believing that the raising of Canadian

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15. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Gage, Feb. 4, 1775.

16. Alfred Leroy Burt, The Old Province of Quebec, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1933, pp. 203-204.

17. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Gage, Feb. 4, 1775.

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battalions of regulars would do much to recall the habitants to the "ancient Habits of Obedience and Discipline" from which they had been released by the British Conquest.

Against this background, Lieutenant-General Gage felt justified in writing Carleton, following the skirmishes at Lexington and Concord on April 19, to send the 7th Regiment with some Companies of Canadians and Indians to Crown Point, in order to create a diversion on his behalf. This letter reached Quebec on May 19, but the next morning a half-pay officer and seigneur named Moses Hazen brought news that American rebels had surprised St. Johns on May 18 and carried off its military stores and garrison; Ticonderoga and Crown Point, which had been captured on May 10 and 12, were still occupied by Ethan Allen's Green Mountain Boys from Vermont and Benedict Arnold's rebels from Connecticut.<sup>18</sup>

These American acts of aggression ran counter to the wishes of the Second Continental Congress which would soon resolve that "no expedition or incursion ought to be undertaken or made, by any colony, or body of colonists, against or into Canada".<sup>19</sup> Since independence was not yet the aim

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18. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Dartmouth, June 7, 1775.

19. Christopher Ward, The War of the Revolution, New York, Macmillan, 1952 Vol. I, p. 139.

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of most members of this Congress, it was logical to authorize only purely defensive measures. The inhabitants of the settlements neighbouring on Canada, however, felt otherwise.

They regarded Canada:

... as a base for attacks, of a kind with which they were painfully familiar, but to be undergone now under disadvantages of numbers and power never before experienced, it was desirable to gain possession of the St. Lawrence and its posts before they were strengthened and garrisoned. At this outset of hostilities, the American insurgents, knowing clearly their own minds, possessed the advantage of the initiative over the British government, which still hesitated to use against those whom it styled rebels the preventative measures it would have taken at once against a recognized enemy. 20

The written protests of Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold, and the former's subsequent appearance on the floor of Congress, must have had the desired effect. On June 27 Major-General Philip Schuyler, commanding its New York Department, was directed to proceed to Ticonderoga and Crown Point: if he found "it practicable and that it will not be disagreeable to the Canadians, he do immediately take possession of St. Johns, Montreal and any other parts of the country".<sup>21</sup>

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20. Mahan, The Major Operations of the Navies in the War of American Independence, op. cit., p. 8.

21. Ward, The War of the Revolution, op. cit., p. 140.

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Meanwhile Carleton had hurried to Montreal. That he had finally been jolted into a sense of reality is evident from the despatch which he wrote to the Secretary of State for the American Colonies, now Lord Dartmouth, on June 7. Instead of being able to assist Gage by mounting an offensive along the Lake Champlain-Lake George-Hudson River route, Carleton suddenly realized that he might have difficulty defending his own colony against rebellious Americans moving in the opposite direction:

The little Force we have in the Province was immediately set in motion, and ordered to assemble at or near St. John's; The Noblesse of this neighbourhood were called upon to collect their Inhabitants, in order to defend themselves, the Savages of those Parts likewise had the same orders; but tho' the gentlemen testified great zeal, neither their Entreaties or their Example could prevail upon the People, a few of the Gentry, consisting principally of the Youth, residing in this Place, and its neighbourhood formed a small Corps of Volunteers under the command of Mr. Samuel Mackay, and took post at St. John's; the Indians shewed as much Backwardness as the Canadian Peasantry.

The consternation in the Towns and Country was great and universal, every Individual seemed to feel our present impotent situation, for tho' in no Danger of internal Commotions, we are equally unprepared for Attack or Defence; not six hundred Rank & File fit for duty upon the whole Extent of this great River, not an armed Vessel, no place of Strength; the ancient Provincial Force enervated and broke to Pieces; all Subordination upset, and the minds of the People poisoned by the Hypocrisy

and Lies practised with so much success in the other Provinces, and which their Emissaries and Friends here have spread abroad with great Art and Diligence; had it not been for those few Troops, three hundred Rebels might have procured all the Arms, Ammunition and Provisions, this Province can afford, and have kept Post at St. John's with great security.

We are at present fortifying a Post there and at Oswegatchie, tho' there are other avenues into the Province, I hope the above may be made sufficiently strong to resist any sudden Attack of this sort; a considerable Force here might not only secure ourselves, but assist General Gage in extinguishing the Flames of Rebellion in the other Provinces more speedily, I fear he has none to spare and it may be too late in the year to have them from Europe. 22

Two days later Carleton issued a proclamation, which put martial law into effect and directed the militia to assembled whenever called upon by their captains.<sup>23</sup> These had been continued in their posts by the British military governors immediately after the Conquest;<sup>24</sup> strange as it may seem, however, no Militia Ordinance had been

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22. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Dartmouth, June 7, 1775.

23. The Quebec Gazette, June 15, 1775.

24. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Dartmouth, June 7, 1775.

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issued during the years of British rule. The English-speaking mercantile element at Montreal and Quebec seems to have gone ahead and formed militia companies for local defence. Those at Quebec City were embodied to guard the magazine and military stores, since less than 60 rank and file of the 7th Regiment of Foot remained there.<sup>25</sup>

Almost 500 effectives of the 7th and 26th Regiments were now garrisoning St. Johns or the smaller fort at Chambly, which was closer to Montreal. This, Carleton correctly deduced, was the most likely objective to be initially sought by the American rebels. Apart from the 96 British rank and file actually at Montreal, the remaining regulars were disposed to meet other possible enemy avenues of approach: 24 at the mouth of the Chaudière River, which was close to Quebec City; 32 at St. Francis, near the mouth of that river which empties into Lake St. Peter; and 13 at the Lachine Rapids. A small company of the 8th Regiment was now stationed further up the St. Lawrence River at Oswegatchie.<sup>26</sup> The remainder of the 8th Foot was garrisoning

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25. The Quebec Gazette, July 6 and 27, Sept. 14 and 21, 1775.

26. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Dartmouth, June 26, 1775.

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Niagara (four companies), Detroit (three companies) and Michilimackinac (two companies).<sup>27</sup> "What adds to our Distress," Carleton would write Lord Dartmouth on August 14, "is the feeble state of the Vessels upon the upper Lakes, which are all very ill manned, and in no ways prepared for War, yet are they much threatened, and the consequences would be fatal to the upper Posts and Country, should they fall into the Enemies Hands".<sup>28</sup>

Since there was scant possibility of American rebels obtaining vessels to dispute those of the Provincial Marine on the Great Lakes, the lack of shipwrights and naval ordnance there was not nearly as serious as Carleton's letter implied. Lake Champlain, however, was a different matter entirely, because the Americans now possessed an armed sloop and schooner, and were busy mounting guns on two row-galleys and 10 bateaux. Carleton had ordered the construction of two vessels at St. Johns, one of which would carry 16 guns, but artificers had to be brought all

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27. P.R.O., W.O. 17/1494, Distribution of His Majesty's Forces in North America, June 11, 1775.

28. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Dartmouth, Aug. 14, 1775.

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the way from Halifax and work was progressing slowly. His efforts to improve the defences of St. Johns and Chambly were frustrated by the unwillingness of the habitants to work on them.<sup>29</sup>

The mandement issued by Bishop Briand and the efforts of the parish clergy helped to check active disloyalty; but in a number of parishes around Montreal and Trois-Rivières the habitants defied the militia officers who tried to organize their companies into some semblance of order. The majority merely wanted to remain aloof from a quarrel that was none of their choosing. Carleton concluded therefore that it would be inadvisable to try to assemble any considerable number of militia - except as a last resort.<sup>30</sup> About 100 of the discharged Scottish veterans who were settled in the province were recruited for the provincial corps of Royal Highland Emigrants and were posted to St. Johns, but the larger number of recruits obtained in the Mohawk Valley could not

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29. Ibid., Nov. 5, 1775.

30. Ibid., Aug. 14, 1775.

be brought into the province immediately because of the American forces about Lake Champlain.

The Americans advanced to the attack of St. Johns during the last days of August because Brigadier-General Richard Montgomery, who was temporarily in command, had learned that the British war vessels were nearing completion and would soon be ready to challenge his naval supremacy on Lake Champlain. Major-General Schuyler had already promised General George Washington that he would invade Quebec; the latter, being well aware of the organizational problems faced by this conscientious New Yorker, now expressed the hope that "you will have a feeble enemy to contend with, and a whole province on your side, two circumstances of great weight in the scale".<sup>31</sup> Washington's own contribution, from the army investing Boston, was to be a smaller expedition which Colonel Benedict Arnold would lead up the Kennebec River to the height of land and then down the Chaudière River to where it flowed into the St. Lawrence River almost across from Quebec City. This threat,

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31. Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, New York, Charles Scribner's & Sons, 1951, Vol. III, p. 537.

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Washington believed, would force Major-General Guy Carleton "either to break up and follow this party to Quebec", which would leave Schuyler's own army unopposed, or else to "suffer that important place [Quebec] to fall into our hands, an event which would have a decisive effect and influence on the public interest".<sup>32</sup>

Montgomery's occupation of Isle-aux-Noix on September 4 permitted his tiny armed flotilla to block the Richelieu River, but he had the greatest difficulty getting his officers and men to undertake a proper siege of St. Johns. Only after part of the American force had managed to slip down river at night to force the surrender of the much smaller Fort Chambly, and Carleton's relief force from Montreal was turned back, did the commander of a badly battered Fort St. Johns surrender on November 3. Carleton realized that the inhabitants would surrender Montreal as soon as the Americans appeared,<sup>33</sup> so he started down river with his few remaining regulars on November 11.

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32. Ibid., p. 532.

33. C.O. 42/34, Carleton to Dartmouth, Nov. 5, 1775.

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Since American shore batteries at Sorel now commanded the St. Lawrence, the British ships and troops were forced to surrender two days later. Carleton, however, had been rowed safely past in a small boat during the dead of night. He reached Quebec City on November 19.

Colonel Benedict Arnold had reached the St. Lawrence 10 days earlier with 600 of the 1,100 Americans who had started out 45 days earlier from the Atlantic coast of Maine, without encountering any British troops. Washington and Arnold had greatly under-estimated both the difficulties to be encountered and the distance to be travelled, so the half-starved and ill-clad survivors encamped at the village of Pointe-aux-Trembles, about 20 miles above Quebec City, were momentarily incapable of action. On December 2, however, Brigadier-General Montgomery arrived from Montreal with 300 men, several field guns and a supply of ammunition, clothing and provisions. The Americans then took up positions before Quebec.

Carleton had purged Quebec of the disaffected and was hopeful that his motley garrison of about 1,200 all ranks could hold its own against the numerically fewer enemy outside the walls. The defenders consisted of about 300 French-speaking militia, 200 English-speaking militia,

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200 Royal Highland Emigrants who were mostly raw recruits, 400 seamen and marines from the ships in port, about 80 carpenters and artificers, and a miscellaneous residue of regulars.<sup>34</sup> The enemy was unlikely to be reinforced before the winter ended, while Carleton had received word that "His Majesty hopes to have an Army of 20,000 men in North America next spring exclusive of the Canadians & Indians, and you may depend upon a Reinforcement of the Regular Troops in Canada..."<sup>35</sup> Therefore his situation was very similar to that of Brigadier-General Hon. James Murray during the winter of 1759-1760, but Carleton had no intention of repeating Murray's mistake of venturing beyond the walls of Quebec and risking battle in the open.

Both General Washington and Congress were counting on the early capture of Quebec for its supplies. The term of enlistment of Arnold's men would expire with the end of the year and Montgomery thought that he would have little

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34. C.O. 42/34, Hamilton to Dartmouth, Nov. 20, 1775.

35. C.O. 42/34, Dartmouth to Carleton, Aug. 2, 1775.

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hope of retaining them after that. Therefore he decided to launch a direct assault against both ends of the lower town on the first dark and stormy night.<sup>36</sup> That proved to be New Year's Eve itself, when a near blizzard was at its height. The defenders were alerted by the American signal rockets, however, and defeated both attacking columns before they could ascend into the upper town. Montgomery was killed and Arnold was wounded; 30 other Americans were killed and more than 400 taken prisoner. About 100 time-expired Americans left for home but the rest of the survivors stayed with Arnold, braving the Canadian winter, short rations and an epidemic of smallpox. Carleton kept his garrison within the walls of Quebec.

News of the American repulse placed General George Washington in a quandry. He could ill spare men for the campaign in Canada from the army with which he was besieging Boston, but unless Quebec was captured the British might use it as a base for a summer offensive along the Lake Champlain and Hudson River valleys towards New York City, which could be attacked simultaneously by a British fleet

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36. Ward, The War of the Revolution, p. 188.

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carrying the troops with which Major-General Sir William Howe was then defending Boston.<sup>37</sup> Washington had already advised Congress against launching an attack against Nova Scotia, because he did not have troops to spare for any expedition that was not defensive in nature and which could readily be cut off from its base by British warships.<sup>38</sup> He had also tried to discourage the spread of war to St. John's Island, whose tiny capital of Charlottetown had been plundered on November 17, 1775 by two New England privateers, therefore he had immediately released acting Governor Phillips Callbeck and another member of the Executive Council made prisoner and brought to his headquarters outside Boston.<sup>39</sup> The council of war now convened by Washington agreed that the New England colonies should divert some of the regiments promised for the coming campaign

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37. Freeman, George Washington, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 10.

38. John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.), The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1931, Vol. IV, p. 292.

39. Ibid., p. 152, See also P.R.O., C.O. 226/6, Stewart to Dartmouth, Dec. 8, 1775.

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to the siege of Quebec.<sup>40</sup> Congress re-affirmed on March 25 that "the reduction of Quebec and the general security of the province of Canada are objects of great concern".<sup>41</sup>

On the following day a British fleet escorted the last of Sir William Howe's regiments from Boston, which already had been cleared of its loyal inhabitants, to Halifax. Here Howe found a greatly relieved Governor Francis Legge of Nova Scotia. Legge had convened a special session of his Legislature as soon as he learned of the American invasion of Canada, had proclaimed martial law on December 5, 1775, and had attempted to call out one-fifth of the militia, selected by lot wherever there were insufficient volunteers. Many companies refused to assemble, however, and there were local disturbances, accentuated by the recurring rumour that the embodied militia would be transported to New England for service against their compatriots. Therefore Legge had issued a

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40. Freeman, George Washington, Vol. IV, p. 11.

41. Ibid., p. 84.

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circular letter on January 12, 1776, which instructed militia officers to reassure their men that they would be required only for local defence in the event of actual invasion; a provincial regiment would be recruited "purely for the defence of the Province".<sup>42</sup> Actually the large New England element in the population of Nova Scotia was content, like large numbers of the inhabitants in the American Colonies, to remain aloof from active participation in the American Revolution: the citizens of Halifax were largely dependent on British naval and military expenditures for their livelihood, while the majority in the small and scattered out-settlements was determined on a neutral course which would permit them to continue trading with New England.<sup>43</sup> Howe rejected several appeals for arms and stores for the company which the acting Governor of St. John's Island was hoping to recruit for local defence. Howe's letter of June 4 advised Callbeck that Vice-Admiral Lord Shulcham was sending a sloop to protect Charlottetown and ordering a frigate from Quebec to keep a watch on the area. The rest of Howe's letter was to the point:

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42. C.O. 217/52, Legge to Dartmouth, Jan. 21, 1776.

43. John Bartlet Brebner, The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years, New York, Columbia University Press, 1937, pp. 299-300.

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As this is judged the most advisable Expedient at present, and the Cannon at Charlotte Town, without an Established post or some force, only affording a Temptation to the Rebels to disturb the peace of the Island, the Admiral at my request, has given directions for bringing them away, in consequence of this Determination, the Company you intended to raise becomes an unnecessary measure. 44

Shortly thereafter Howe embarked his army once again and sailed for New York. On July 2 he landed his troops on Staten Island.

Much earlier Major-General John Burgoyne had been sent from Great Britain to the relief of Quebec with nine British regiments of foot, four companies of Royal Artillery, and a considerable strength of German mercenaries.<sup>45</sup> On March 28, 1776, a new Secretary of State for the American Colonies, Lord George Sackville-Germain, wrote Governor Carleton as follows:

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44. C.O. 226/6, Howe to Callbeck, June 4, 1776.

45. C.T. Atkinson, "British Forces in North America, 1774-1781: Their Distribution and Strength", Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. XVI (London, 1937), p. 9.

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If the Rebels should attempt to keep Possession of Montreal, or any other place in Canada, on your side the Lakes, the Army under your Command will be sufficient to drive them from that part of the Province, and there is no doubt if you succeed in the first operation but that you will endeavour to pass the Lakes as early as possible, and in your future progress contribute to the success of the army under General Howe. 46

Despite the fact that the Americans before Quebec City had received some reinforcements and more were on the way, they hurriedly retreated when the first British warships appeared on May 6 and the defenders finally sallied forth.

The Americans halted at Sorel. Considerably reinforced, they re-crossed the St. Lawrence River and attempted to surprise the British advanced guard at Trois-Rivières on June 8. This attempt failed and the British troops which had been carried farther up river by troopship could easily have cut off their further escape. But

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46. C.O. 42/35, Sackville-Germain to Carleton, March 28, 1776.

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Carleton the statesman now seems to have over-ruled Carleton the soldier: the Americans were allowed to abandon Canada and escape up Lake Champlain.<sup>47</sup> Presumably he thought that these disillusioned rebels would return to their homes and persuade their fellows to resume a loyal conduct towards King George III.<sup>48</sup> As regards the Canadians, however, Carleton subsequently reported to Lord George Sackville-Germain his belief that "there is nothing to fear from them while we are in a state of prosperity, and nothing to hope for when in distress; I speak of the People at large; there are among them who are guided by Sentiments of honour, but the multitude is influenced only by hopes of gain, or fear of punishment".<sup>49</sup>

By the time Carleton had constructed a naval flotilla to dispute command of Lake Champlain, the campaigning season was nearing an end. On October 10 this tiny navy managed to destroy 11 of the 16 nondescript vessels commanded by Brigadier-General Benedict Arnold off Valcourt Island, but

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47. See Carleton's letters and orders on C.O. 42/35.

48. A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1940, pp. 10-11.

49. C.O. 42/35, Carleton to Sackville-Germain, Sept. 28, 1776.

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Carleton decided against continuing against Ticonderoga and attempting to establish communications with Howe's army which had captured New York City and was now cautiously probing northward.<sup>50</sup>

Carleton had been knighted for his successful defence of Quebec City, but his dilatory conduct of the succeeding campaign was one of the reasons advanced by Lord George Sackville-Germain for not giving him a field command in 1777.<sup>51</sup> Lord Sackville-Germain's new plan called for Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne to advance up Lake Champlain and continue towards Albany, where he should meet Lieutenant-General Sir William Howe moving north from New York City. Their junction would cut off New England from the rest of the rebellious colonies. Meanwhile Lieutenant-Colonel Barry St. Leger would lead a small force from Oswego along that water route to Albany.<sup>52</sup> Yet success of this scheme, Major-General Sir James Carmichael-Smyth, R.E. would

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50. Ibid., Oct. 14, 1776.

51. C.O. 42/36, Sackville-Germain to Carleton, March 26, 1777.

52. F.J. Hudleston, Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne, London, Jonathan Cape, 1928, pp. 123-126.

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observe many years later, "was unfortunately made to depend upon too many contingencies".<sup>53</sup> By the time the British Army in and around New York City had cleared the enemy from New Jersey and Pennsylvania and was ready to move up the Hudson River, Burgoyne had been surrounded at Saratoga by much superior enemy forces and forced to surrender. St. Leger had failed to advance farther than Fort Stanwix at the head of Wood Creek and the Mohawk River. According to Carmichael-Smyth:

The object, however, after all, of placing a corps at Albany, to threaten the rear of the Massachusetts and Connecticut provinces, was to be accomplished by water from New York at one quarter the expense and trouble; confining the operations from Canada to the capture of Ticonderoga, and the destruction of the American boats and flotilla upon Lake Champlain. 54

The character of the war was now to change completely so far as Canada was concerned. The British Government transferred the scene of major military operations far to the south in the hope of securing wide-

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53. Carmichael-Smyth, Precis of the Wars in Canada, p. 129.

54. Ibid., p. 132.

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spread support from loyalist sympathisers there. Further operations launched from Canada were mere harassing raids by small forces of Indians, provincials and regulars.

During the campaigning season of 1777 American influence had been eradicated from the small settlement along the St. John River; Fort Howe was erected at its mouth; and the local Indians were won over from their hitherto neutral position. However, continue activity by American privateers and the French declaration of war against Great Britain in 1778 resulted in second thoughts on the subject of establishing garrisons at each of the more important ports of Nova Scotia and St. John's Island. Yet the small detachments of provincial or loyalist troops intermittently made available for such duty were generally too small to be of much use and merely provided an excuse for New England privateersmen to plunder and burn, whenever and wherever they landed. Convenient examples are the successful raids against Liverpool in Nova Scotia and St. Peter's on St. John's Island.<sup>55</sup> The only answer to

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55. D.C. Harvey (ed.), The Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1780-1789, Toronto, Champlain Society, 1958, pp. xxvi and 41-42; C.O. 226/7, Callbeck to Sackville-Germain, Aug. 18, 1778.

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privateering and commerce raiding by naval vessels, the guerre de course at which the French excelled, was overwhelming British naval strength in North American waters. This the Royal Navy did not possess until the summer of 1780, when enough frigates and smaller war vessels finally became available to keep the coastal waters generally free of privateers, to harry them out of their refuge in the Strait of Canso, and to prevent them from interfering with local traffic in the lower reaches of the St. Lawrence River.<sup>56</sup>

The arrival at Quebec on June 26, 1778 of Lieutenant-General Frederic Haldimand to replace Sir Guy Carleton as governor of that province had practically coincided with the first offensive action by France at sea. For the next four years Haldimand was to be confronted by the bogey of attack by land and sea, accompanied by internal revolt. Unknown to him, however, mutual suspicion and jealousy would prevent one or other of the French Government and the American Congress from agreeing to any co-operative undertaking.<sup>57</sup> Washington did authorize preparations to be

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56. Haldimand Papers B/202, Haldimand to O'Hara, July 27, 1782.

57. Freeman, George Washington, Vol. V, pp. 85 and 418.

made for attacks on Canada,<sup>58</sup> but the American patrols which twice kidnapped members of the British garrison on Carleton Island were the only enemy who came close to a Canadian fort.<sup>59</sup>

Carleton Island was situated off the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, just below its emission from Lake Ontario. During the summer of 1778 Lieutenant William Twiss of the Royal Engineers supervised the construction there of Fort Haldimand, to serve as a transshipment point for supplies bound for Fort Niagara by armed schooner instead of the poorly protected and located post at Oswegatchie. Lieutenant John Schank, R.N., who had been in charge of earlier naval construction on Lake Champlain, considered that the harbour at Carleton Island would make an ideal shipyard for the Provincial Marine. Carleton Island would later also serve as a jumping off place for raids against American settlements in central New York.<sup>60</sup>

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58. Ibid., p. 189n.

59. Major C.C.J. Bond, "The British Base at Carleton Island", Ontario History, LIII (March 1960).

60. Ibid.

Haldimand's despatches continually refer to the inadequacy of the military forces under his command. Substantial garrisons were needed for Quebec and the Montreal area, and the upper posts which must be retained and improved as an encouragement to the fur traders and Indians. A considerable field force was also essential for employment in a counter-attack role against any invading army. Mere insufficiency of numbers was not, however, Haldimand's only reason for complaint. There were too few British regulars - only 166 officers and 3,443 other ranks.<sup>61</sup> Too many of the 3,900 Germans seem to have been poor quality troops left behind from Burgoyne's expedition. According to Haldimand these last were "lazy and inactive, unwilling to work, which here constitutes the greatest part of a Soldier's duty".<sup>62</sup> Moreover, so many attempted to desert and join their countrymen settled in Pennsylvania that they could not be left for long at any frontier fort. Haldimand considered that the King's Royal Regiment of New York, raised by Sir

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61. Atkinson, "British Forces in North America", op. cit., pp. 15-16.

62. C.O. 42/39, Haldimand to Sackville-Germain, Sep. 13, 1779.

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John Johnson from loyalists who had fled the Mohawk Valley, was a "useful Corps with the Ax", but "not altogether to be depended on with the Firelock".<sup>63</sup> Dread of another winter invasion made Haldimand a victim of the common delusion that all Americans were "trained to the woods from their Infancy, know well how to shelter themselves from the cold, and are excellent Marks Men".<sup>64</sup>

Haldimand's original excuse for not embodying a corps of French-speaking Canadians, as directed by his instructions, was that he was waiting until the late autumn (in 1778), when the "most robust and active of the men" should have returned home from fur trading activities in the western country and the fisheries of the lower St. Lawrence.<sup>65</sup> Like the Marquis de Montcalm some 20 years earlier, Haldimand was faced by the fact that numbers of young habitants preferred summer employment with the merchants of Montreal to transporting military stores as militiamen

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63. C.O. 42/39, Haldimand to Clinton, May 26, 1779.

64. C.O. 42/38, Haldimand's "Sketch of the Military State the Province of Quebec", July 25, 1778.

65. C.O. 42/38, Haldimand to Sackville-Germain, Oct. 15, 1778.

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under the conditions set forth in the Militia Ordinance finally issued in 1777. He had, according to the balance of this letter of October 15, 1778 to Lord George Sackville-Germain:

...received some assistance from the Country by Corvées, without which the Transport of Provisions between Montreal and Carleton Island would be impracticable; but in the present disposition of the People, I have judged it highly requisite to observe the utmost caution, not to make demands that from exciting Murmurs that might lead them to a declaration of Sentiments, which the French Alliance with the Rebels has undoubtedly raised in numbers of those who in regard of the Rebellion were unquestionably attached to Government and renewed in the others the Symptoms, of which change in the Canadians is everywhere manifest, and the more dangerous, as multitudes of them are but too sensible of our inability, with the troops we have in an entire open Country, to control them if any circumstances should invite their resolutions as their inclinations are but too much already.<sup>66</sup>

Realizing shortly after his arrival that he had insufficient resources to begin construction of a "formidable Citadel" at Quebec City as directed, Haldimand decided merely

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66. C.O. 42/38, Haldimand to Sackville-Germain, Oct. 15, 1778.

to make sufficient additions to the existing defences to foil any further American attack during the current Revolutionary War.<sup>67</sup> Therefore early in 1779 Lieutenant Twiss began the construction of an extensive outworks to the front and the rear of the left flank of the old French walls, so as to enclose the whole of the highest ground of Cape Diamond. The existing defences of St. Johns and Isle-aux-Noix were also strengthened; work was continued at Carleton Island; Fort Niagara was improved, a new fort was built at Detroit. In consequence, Haldimand explained in a despatch of October 24 to Lord George Sackville-Germain, he was not able to build a fortress at Sorel. But barracks had been constructed there for 1,200 troops and Haldimand planned to build up Sorel as a base for counter-offensive operations against an enemy advancing along either the St. Francis or Richelieu Rivers, or attempting to cut across country from St. Johns to Laprairie for an attack on Montreal.<sup>68</sup>

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67. Haldimand Papers B-54, Haldimand to Townshend, June 13 1779.

68. C.O. 42/39, Haldimand to Sackville-Germain, Oct. 24, 1779.

Lord George Sackville-Germain approved the increase in naval strength on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. He was convinced that the continued fidelity of the French-speaking Canadians and Indians depended on retention of the upper posts, but his letter of March 17, 1780 emphasized that the lower posts were not to be denuded of troops for that purpose.<sup>69</sup> Haldimand, possessing a better grasp of the geography of the poorly mapped Old Northwest, was not seriously worried about the continued safety of the British forts there. Furthermore, although Haldimand realized the importance of winning back the allegiance of Vermont, as a partial buffer against invasion of Canada, he was not convinced that Ethan Allen and his brothers were sincere in their protestations. As it turned out, he was correct in his belief that they were merely trying to scare Congress into agreeing that Vermont should be independent of both New York and New Hampshire.<sup>70</sup>

Haldimand's despatch of October 25, 1780 indicated that the people in his province were subconsciously aware

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69. Haldimand Papers B/50, Sackville-Germain to Haldimand, March 17, 1780.

70. See Haldimand's relevant despatches on C.O. 42/41-44.

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of the fact that retention of Quebec City was the key to a successful defence of Canada. According to his own words:

...the general Disposition & Behaviour of the Inhabitants, make it beyond a Doubt to a nice observer that we have little to expect from their assistance in Military Operations, & that they have learned to consider the arrival of the Fleet as an Event that will certainly happen and that it is equally sure their Efforts to reconquer the Province will be successful. 71

After learning that a final Peace Treaty had been signed at Paris on September 3, 1783, Haldimand wrote privately to the Secretary of State for a new Home Department, which would be responsible for the continuing colonies, that this "Province can only be preserved by bringing back the Canadians to a Regular Subordination, and by rendering them useful as a well Disciplined Militia".<sup>72</sup> The security of Nova Scotia and St. John's Island, for which Haldimand was not responsible, however, would continue to depend on there being British naval superiority in the North Atlantic Ocean.

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71. C.O. 42/40, Haldimand to Sackville-Germain, Oct. 25, 1780.

72. Haldimand Papers B/56, Haldimand to North, Oct. 24, 1783.

## CHAPTER II

## PEACEFUL DECADE

Great Britain had recognized American independence in an effort to split the colonists' alliance with France and Spain and to regain their good will and trade. In consequence British peace commissioners agreed to a Treaty which was not altogether in the best interests of the continuing possessions of King George III in North America. These comprised Newfoundland, St. John's Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec, and a vast but little-known hinterland. The populations were small but, in all except the first and last, they were being increased by an influx of loyalist settlers from the former American Colonies.

British Army officers on the spot had considered that the most easterly section of the international boundary should follow the line of the Kennebec River which, together with the Chaudière River, would provide the best overland communication route between Halifax and Quebec City.<sup>1</sup>

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1. P.R.O., W.O. 55/1558 (3), "A General Description of the Province of Nova Scotia, and a Report of the present State of the Defences, 28th Day of July 1783", prepared by Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Morse, R.E.

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British troops were in physical possession of Maine as far as the Penobscot River, to make absurd the American demand for the boundary to follow the St. John River; but the British plenipotentiaries agreed to accept the poorly defined St. Croix River as a compromise. From its source the boundary would follow the height of land to the 45th parallel of latitude and continue along it to the St. Lawrence River. Since British troops were in possession of the Great Lakes region, it was agreed that the international boundary should follow the crooked route of the St. Lawrence waterway, through the Great Lakes, and then continue to the north-west corner of the Lake of the Woods. John Adams of the American delegation had gone so far as to draft an article which would prohibit fortifications along this boundary and armed vessels on the Great Lakes, but then he does not seem to have pressed for its conclusion in the final Treaty of Paris.<sup>2</sup>

There being no conceivable external danger to the provinces of Nova Scotia and St. John's Island so long as units of the Royal Navy were based on Halifax and the

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2. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, op. cit., pp. 16-40.

youthful United States possessed no naval force, their legislatures were content to continue existing Militia Acts and merely enroll new citizens into what was really only a paper organization. In the new province of New Brunswick, carved out of that portion of Nova Scotia lying north of the Bay of Fundy in 1784, however, future military defence had to be considered when allocating land. The 13 provincial corps of loyalists disbanded during the previous autumn had been given farms along the banks of the St. John River. The Militia Act passed by the Legislature of New Brunswick in 1787, and very similar to those of Nova Scotia and St. John's Island, required compulsory service from physically fit males aged 16 to 50, with such exceptions as crown officials, ferrymen, millers and conscientious objectors. Every captain was authorized in the event of an alarm, invasion, insurrection or rebellion to mobilize his company and be prepared to march to any part of the province.<sup>3</sup> The act required every man to possess a musket, bayonet, cartridge box, nine cartridges and nine bullets, but most veterans had been forced to sell their army muskets, retained

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3. 27 Geo. III, cap. 1.

on discharge, in order to buy extra provisions and farm accessories.<sup>4</sup>

Since miles of wilderness separated New Brunswick from any American settlement, it was deemed sufficient for the maintenance of law and order to have half a battalion of regulars in garrison at the mouth of the St. John River. The rest of this battalion was stationed across the Bay of Fundy at Annapolis Royal. Similarly weak regiments of foot, with an establishment of only 408 rank and file and a much smaller actual strength, were at each of Fort Cumberland and Shelburne. Three such regiments were in garrison at Halifax, less two companies detached to Charlottetown on St. John's Island. Total strength, including artillerymen, was about 2,400 all ranks.<sup>5</sup>

In the province of Quebec, Governor Haldimand had about 150 officers and 2,500 other ranks, organized as four companies of Royal Artillery and seven regiments of foot.<sup>6</sup> Even though the American Congress had retained only one battery of artillery in service and left the problem of

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4. P.R.O., C.O. 188/5, Carleton to Dundas, March 29, 1793.

5. C.O. 217/35, Campbell to Sydney, June 14, 1784.

6. W.O. 17/1579, Monthly Strength Return of British Troops serving in Canada, Jan. 1, 1785.

defence to the militias of the individual states,<sup>7</sup> there was already real cause for friction. Several of the inland forts being garrisoned by British regulars were located in territory which had been ceded to the United States. The most important of these so-called "western posts" were Oswegatchie, Oswego, Niagara, Presque Isle, Sandusky, Detroit and Michilimackinac. What was worse, no thought had been given by the British peace commissioners to the interests of the Indian allies, whose hunting grounds were now in American territory.

Haldimand quickly realized that the United States was in no mood to placate what most Americans considered to be bloodthirsty savages, particularly when land-hungry citizens were streaming westward. Since Joseph Brant and several chiefs soon suspected the truth and were impressed by neither a liberal distribution of presents nor the harangues of Sir John Johnson of the Indian Department, Haldimand decided to avoid the possibility of an Indian war by retaining the western posts. This view was subsequently accepted by Lord Sydney, who had become Secretary of State for Home Affairs when a new British Government was formed in December 1783. The official excuse was retaliation against

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7. Major.-Gen. Emory Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1904, pp. 66-74.

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the Americans because of the inability of loyalists to secure restoration of their property and civil rights from individual states, which refused to honour the commitment made in the Treaty of Paris and accepted by Congress.<sup>8</sup>

During the spring and early summer of 1784, arrangements were made to provide homes on crown lands for the loyalists collected in refugee camps or still serving in provincial corps at the upper posts. Haldimand managed, however, to keep loyalists out of the area bordering the Vermont frontier later to become known as the Eastern Townships, on the plea that the expansion of French-speaking settlement here would create a racial and religious barrier to peaceful American penetration.<sup>9</sup> The largest settlement was along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, extending west from the seigniory of Longueuil to the Bay of Quinté. Settlers were assigned land according to the corps in which they had served, except that Protestants and Roman Catholics were placed separately. A

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8. Theory developed in Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp. 82-102.

9. Haldimand Papers B/56, Haldimand to North, Nov. 27, 1783; B/50, Sydney to Haldimand, April 8, 1784.

number of disbanded regulars and even some German mercenaries were included in the most westerly township. Most of Butler's Rangers settled along the west bank of the Niagara River, from where they had set out on their raids against central New York. Only a handful of loyalists continued in the Detroit area, which was to remain basically a French-speaking settlement for some years yet. Families earlier left behind in the rebellious colonies and others now being persecuted as loyalists made haste to cross into British territory by way of Fort Oswego.

The situation was still fluid when a new British Governor sailed for Quebec in August 1786. This was Lord Dorchester, the former Sir Guy Carleton. He now held a commission as Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief over the whole of British North America. Lord Dorchester's subsequent request for direction about the western posts crossed a despatch from Lord Sydney advising that it would not be proper to refuse the Indians "such supplies of ammunition as might enable them to defend themselves".<sup>10</sup> The Governor was, however, instructed to supply them "in a

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10. C.O. 42/50, Sydney to Dorchester, April 5, 1787.

way the least likely to alarm the Americans" or to incite the Indians "to any hostile proceedings".

As early as June 3, 1784, the American Congress had decided, in anticipation of British troops evacuating the western posts, to ask four of the states belonging to what was still a very loose and weak Confederation to furnish militia quotas for a force of 700 enlisted men, properly officered, to do garrison duty there for a 12-month period. During 1785 this force was converted into a regular regiment of infantry, the men engaging to serve for three years on the frontier. Two companies of artillery were added to this tiny United States Army in 1786 and a second infantry regiment was authorized in 1787. Yet the framers of the American Constitution were to compromise when it came to defence and leave the militia under the control of the individual states, except when the President as commander-in-chief should call it into the "actual service of the United States".<sup>11</sup> The

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11. Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, op. cit., pp. 68-74.

Militia Act finally passed by Congress in 1792 provided that all able-bodied white males and aged 18 to 45 should be enrolled as a militia.<sup>12</sup> Since the clauses in earlier and unsuccessful militia bills relating to actual training had had to be omitted in order to ensure passage of this legislation, the state militias were merely organizations on paper.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile Lord Dorchester was trying to make the best possible use of his military resources but these, as he had pointed out in a despatch dated November 8, 1787, were limited:

Two thousand Troops extended Eleven Hundred Miles on a frontier (where several months of the year the communication is impracticable) in large forts falling into ruins, can neither cover the country, nor preserve themselves, against a respectable force, tolerably well conducted, from being captured, without some powerful assistance.<sup>14</sup>

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12. U.S. Statutes at Large, I, Second Congress, Sess. I, Ch. 33, 1792.

13. William H. Riker, Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy, Washington, Public Affairs Press, 1957, pp. 18-21.

14. C.O. 42/51, Dorchester to Sydney, Nov. 8, 1787.

At this time the enrolled militia in the established settlements of the province of Quebec totalled 636 officers and 24,264 other ranks who were French-speaking and 63 officers and 982 other ranks who were English-speaking; there were a further 450 militiamen in the Gaspé Peninsula and 842 at Detroit. There were also the loyalists and former regulars: 996 settled along the upper St. Lawrence River, 843 around Kingston and the Bay of Quinté, and 457 at Niagara. Even though disgruntled at having to live under French civil laws and at the delay in having their land claims attended to, they could be depended upon to join the regular troops in defence of their own immediate settlements.

When the provincial Militia Ordinance had been renewed in April of 1787, a provision had been inserted for the embodiment of detachments for two-year periods of training and service. Lord Dorchester wanted to believe that such a step would "afford the means of teaching the people that the Defence of this Country is their own immediate concern, a truth important for them to learn, and for us to teach".<sup>15</sup> He argued that the further step

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15. Ibid., June 13, 1787.

of embodying one loyalist and two French-speaking battalions, on regular establishments and with himself as colonel, would provide employment as officers for "residents of distinction". Having become somewhat concerned about the attitude of the habitants, who continued to be bitter about the administration of the corvée, however, Lord Dorchester did not attempt to embody even the detachments now authorized by the Militia Ordinance.<sup>16</sup>

During the summer of 1788 the Commanding Royal Engineer, Captain Gother Mann, made another survey of the upper posts, whose fortifications were now in an even more ruinous state.<sup>17</sup> Lord Dorchester's despatch of March 8, 1790 expressed concern for their safety from possible attack by Americans or disgruntled Indians. Due to the isolated condition of each of these decaying forts, no plan for mutual defence was possible and an aggressive enemy could reduce them one by one. In order to wage a defensive campaign successfully, he would need at least

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16. Ibid., Nov. 8, 1787.

17. C.O. 42/88, Mann to Dorchester, Oct 29, 1792.

4,000 additional regular troops.<sup>18</sup> The bulk of these, however, would be held as a central reserve to counter-attack an invading army which either followed the route of Montgomery's expedition of 1775 or kept away from Montreal and headed more directly for Quebec.

On September 25, 1790 Lord Dorchester returned to the idea of embodying a portion of the militia in an effort to "revive a spirit of national defence".<sup>19</sup> One-third or one-half might be discharged annually and replaced by volunteers or by ballot from the remaining personnel of the sedentary militia companies. Something had to be done, his letter insisted, to jar the inhabitants from their lethargy before an emergency should be upon the province:

The people are now enervated, few of them bring their arms to the parade, when they assemble for exercise, although it is imagined, every house has at least one gun, and some two or three, they are however tolerably punctual in attending these parades with very few refractory exceptions.

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18. C.O. 42/67, Dorchester to Grenville, March 8, 1790.

19. C.O. 42/69, Dorchester to Grenville, Sept. 25, 1790.

A copy of this proposal was sent to the governors of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

By this time the province of Quebec had a population of approximately 130,000 men, women and children. In 30 years the number of French-speaking Canadians had almost doubled. About two-thirds of the 20,000 English-speaking inhabitants were living in the settlements southwest of the Ottawa River, where the original loyalists were still being joined by families from the United States. The British Government decided to divide the province, roughly along the line of the Ottawa River which conveniently separated the freehold grants from all the seigniories except that of Longueuil. Regardless of racial and religious complexities, both new provinces would receive the institutions of representative government already enjoyed by the inhabitants of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and St. John's Island.

Clause XLVI of the so-called Constitutional Act of 1791 reaffirmed the pledge of 1778 that "the King and Parliament of Great Britain will not impose any Duty, Tax or Assessment whatever, payable in any of his Majesty's Colonies, Provinces, and Plantations, in North America or

the West Indies, except only such Duties as it may be expedient to propose for the Regulation of Commerce, the net Produce of such Duties to be always paid and applied to and for use of the Colony, Province, or Plantation in which the same shall be respectively levied, in such Manner as other Duties collected by the Authority of the respective General Courts or General Assemblies of such Colonies, Provinces, or Plantations are ordinarily paid and applied".<sup>20</sup> Thus, apart from the upkeep of the local militia, defence expenditure in each of the provinces of British North America would have to be defrayed from a substantial military chest kept filled by the British treasury.

The actual division into Lower and Upper Canada was effected by subsequent Order in Council. Colonel John Graves Simcoe was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the new province of Upper Canada. One of his first acts on arrival was to agree with Lieutenant-Governor Sir Alured Clarke of Lower Canada that a more realistic attitude would have to be taken towards settlement.

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20. 31 Geo. III, cap. 31.

Immigration was reduced to a trickle, except for New Englanders who had been crossing the border from Vermont and squatting in the area deliberately reserved by Haldimand for future occupation by French-speaking Canadians. The obvious answer was loyal English-speaking settlers; but where to find them, since the British Government would do nothing for another generation to foster emigration from the British Isles. The answer was the United States for, curiously enough, there was a common British belief that these contained thousands of people already disgusted with a republican form of government and retaining fond memories of life under British rule.<sup>21</sup> On February 7, 1792 Clarke and Simcoe issued almost identical proclamations. These offered 200 acre farms to individuals who would take up residence within six months, and large blocks of land to enterprising land speculators who would act as developers. The only safeguard deemed necessary was a simple declaration:

I [A.B.] do promise and declare  
that I will maintain and defend  
to the utmost of my power the  
authority of the King in His  
Parliament as the supreme  
Legislature of this Province.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp. 178-181.

22. Copies in C.O. 42/89 and in The Quebec Gazette Feb. 9, 1792.

## PEACEFUL DECADE

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There proved to be all sorts of excuses for not having fought during the American Revolution, even for having fought on the wrong side; and the loyalists welcomed the newcomers into Upper Canada, which attracted the majority. Simcoe particularly encouraged the immigration of Quakers, Mennonites and Dunkers, even though these had conscientious objections against military service. As long as land in the new Eastern Townships of Lower Canada and in Upper Canada was cheaper than that held by "land jobbers" in northern New York State, was more accessible than in the Old Northwest, and was not menaced by hostile Indians, the North American migratory movement would be to British-controlled territory. Few of the newcomers cared whether they lived under the American or British flag, as long as they were permitted to live in peace.

## CHAPTER III

## DEFENCE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The French declaration of war on February 1, 1793 did not take the British Government by surprise. The British could not long have acquiesced in the absorption of Belgium by Revolutionary France, even if they had been willing to stomach the execution of King Louis XVI and the spread of liberté, égalité et fraternité across Europe. The first step was to despatch troops to the Low Countries, to co-operate with the Austrian and Prussian armies which had been unsuccessfully opposing the ragged soldiers of France, but the Government decided that its main military effort should be directed against French colonial possessions.<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for this was left to the Home Secretary, Henry Dundas, who was to become increasingly involved in colonial matters as the war continued.

Three of the four British regiments of foot garrisoning "Nova Scotia and its Dependencies" were ordered

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1. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, British Strategy, Military & Economic, Cambridge, University Press, 1944, pp. 80-83.

to the West Indies to take part in expeditions against French islands there.<sup>2</sup> Brigadier-General James Ogilvie was instructed to embark the remaining 4th Regiment of Foot at Halifax end, in co-operation with the Royal Navy, to seize the French colony of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon before it could become a base for enemy activities. This was accomplished without bloodshed, on May 14, and a small garrison was left in occupation of Saint-Pierre.<sup>3</sup> Because the French Navy had been temporarily crippled by the loss of many of its better officers as émigrés from the Revolution, the Royal Navy was in undisputed control of the North Atlantic Ocean. Thus the British maritime colonies were in no real danger. Yet in order to reassure their populations, the Lieutenant-Governors of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia were authorized to raise provincial corps not exceeding 600 rank and file for local service.<sup>4</sup> The Lieutenant-Governor of St. John's Island,

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2. C.O. 42/93, Dundas to Clarke, May 1, 1793.

3. J. Mackay Hitsman, "Capture of Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon, 1793", Canadian Army Journal, XIII (July, 1959), pp. 77-81.

4. C.O. 42/93, Dundas to Clarke, May 1, 1793.

however, was told that a similar corps was unnecessary: arms and ammunition would be forwarded for use by his untrained militia, which should be capable of repelling any purely predatory raid.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile the rulers of Canada had been plagued by groundless fears: a French expedition might be sent up the St. Lawrence River; American forces might attempt to seize the two provinces while Britain was busily engaged elsewhere. Lower Canada had four understrength regular battalions of infantry, totalling about 1,600 effectives among their rank and file. In Upper Canada there were the 5th and 24th Regiments of Foot, with little more than 700 rank and file, and 350 of the revived Queen's Rangers. Four small companies of Royal Artillery provided detachments at the forts in both provinces.<sup>6</sup> A Militia Act was the first measure enacted by the Legislature of Upper Canada in June, 1793. Militia companies were to be

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5. C.O. 226/13, Fanning to Dundas, April 20, 1793; Dundas to Fanning, Aug. 10, 1793.

6. C.O. 17/1504 contains relevant monthly strength returns.

assembled not less than twice or more than four times in a year; but they could not be compelled to serve beyond the limits of their own county unless there actually was a war or state of emergency. In the more populous Lower Canada, the Militia Act approved by the Legislature's special wartime session included the following:

... it shall not be lawful to order the Militia nor any part thereof, to march out of the Province, except for the assistance of the Province of Upper-Canada, when the same shall actually be invaded; and except in pursuit of an enemy, who have invaded this Province; and except also for the destruction of any vessel or vessels, built or building; or any depot or magazine, formed or forming; or for the attack of an enemy who may be embodying or marching for the purpose of invading this Province; or for the attack of any fortification, which may be erecting to cover an invasion thereto.<sup>8</sup>

As long as the militia of both provinces were neither properly armed nor trained, their role in an emergency would be restricted to transporting supplies, building roads and fortifications, and guarding prisoners. The supply of muskets in the Canadas was subsequently increased to meet the possible needs of the militia, but Lord

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7. 33 Geo. III, Chap. 1.

8. 34 Geo. III, Chap. 4.

Dorchester and Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe were merely directed to exert their "utmost endeavours" to put them upon "as respectable a footing as possible".<sup>9</sup>

As early as March 5, 1792 the Congress of the United States had passed an Act to provide for the better protection of the American frontier. This led to the creation of a mixed force of cavalry, artillery and infantry known as the Legion of the United States. Its commander, Major-General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, planned to pacify the Indians of the Old Northwest and avenge the defeats suffered earlier by Generals Harmar and St. Clair.<sup>10</sup>

In Upper Canada, however, there was a widespread belief that Wayne was planning an invasion. Simcoe had still only 1,325 regulars, including his own Queen's Rangers. Therefore on September 20, 1793 he wrote Lord Dorchester that "little is to be expected from a people who have already suffered severely for their Loyalty, & too many of whom poor & dispirited, are more apt to regret what they have lost, than to remember what they have received".<sup>11</sup> There was no hope of augmenting the strength

9. C.O. 42/98, Dundas to Dorchester, May 11, 1794.

10. Emory Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, p. 80.

11. C.O. 42/317, Simcoe to Dorchester, Sept. 20 1793.

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of his existing regular regiments by local enlistment: "no recruits can be raised in this province, so very high is the price of wages". On October 7 Lord Dorchester replied that the dearth of regular troops — he had only 1,490 all ranks in Lower Canada — would make it impossible to defend the long frontier of Upper Canada:

... yet, notwithstanding this want of Troops, should hostilities commence, the War cannot be confined to Upper Canada, and the greatest part of the Forces may eventually be drawn from thence whatever may be the inconvenience to that province: I shall therefore recommend, that after securing the established and direct communication as well as circumstances will permit, you keep the rest of the Troops free to act, where the occasion may required. You will, no doubt, pay great attention to the Militia, and make such arrangements as shall enable them to bring forth their whole Strength, and employ it to the best advantage; for it may so happen, that on their Strength alone they must depend for their defence.<sup>12</sup>

Dorchester's reasoning, as Simcoe well knew, was based on the conviction that so long as the Royal Navy controlled the North Atlantic and Quebec was held by a competent garrison, any American attempts to conquer the provinces

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12. C.O. 42/318, Dorchester to Simcoe, Oct. 7, 1793.

"must be impotent and abortive".<sup>13</sup> Because of the inevitable approach of a long Canadian winter, an invading army would not have time to reduce both Montreal and Quebec in a single campaigning season. Spring would bring up the St. Lawrence a powerful fleet and an army capable of recapturing whatever had been lost — a repetition of 1776.

Lord Dorchester's despatch of October 25 to Henry Dundas detailed his own fears. Were American plans to establish posts on Lake Ontario and Lake Erie merely an aspect of the westward movement of settlement, or were the Americans planning to cause trouble while Great Britain was fully engaged in a war with France?

"Independent of the French Intrigue, the Canadas alone cannot stand the contest," he wrote; "Nova Scotia & New Brunswick can give no assistance."<sup>14</sup> The 400 regulars

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13. C.O. 42/313, Simcoe to Dundas, Feb. 23, 1794.

14. C.O. 42/97, Dorchester to Dundas, Oct. 25, 1793.

of the 4th Foot were split between Saint-Pierre, Newfoundland and Halifax, while the recently mobilized provincial corps - Royal Nova Scotia Regiment and King's New Brunswick Regiment - had only about 240 recruits each. He requested 4,000 or 5,000 additional infantry regulars for his Canadian garrison, plus large quantities of naval stores, a consignment of ships carpenters and 700 or 800 seamen to expand the Provincial Marine. He felt that a further 6,000 troops should be despatched to Halifax, to act on either the defensive or offensive, as circumstances might dictate. "I am aware", this letter continued:

... that this will change the present plan for carrying on the war, it will necessarily draw all the Infantry which can be spared from home to the American Service, or to attack the French Possessions out of Europe; but without it I consider these Provinces as incapable of making any defence provided an attack is conducted with common sense either by the Americans or by the French.

The extraordinary naval preparations for the Lakes may indeed be spared when a firm Peace is concluded with America & part of the reinforcement required for the Canadas may be sent to Halifax, & enable us to act more powerfully against the French Possessions, combined always with a proper attention to Nova Scotia and to the River St. Lawrence.

At the same time that I point out the Precautions necessary to put this country in a proper state of defence I must acknowledge that the Interests of the King's American Dominions require Peace: and I think the Interests of the States require it still more, though their Conduct both to us & the Indians has created many difficulties.

In the natural course of things the People from the States will overspread all the Country south of the Lakes, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi and beyond: the treasures & People of Europe are already employed to forward this purpose, and it would have been still more advanced at this hour but for their own impatience, to say nothing worse.

Simcoe replied to Dorchester's letter of October 7 that the Queen's Rangers had been concentrated at York as a mobile reserve; defence of advanced posts would be left largely to invalids or older soldiers of his regular regiments and to veterans who were settled in Upper Canada. Simcoe did not think, however, that his province would remain part of the British Empire should all the regular troops be withdrawn.<sup>15</sup> Due to the slowness of communication between the capitals of Lower and Upper Canada, it was not possible for Simcoe to send this answer until December 2.

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15. C.O. 42/318, Simcoe to Dorchester, Dec. 2, 1793.

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On December 15 Simcoe complained directly to Henry Dundas that he could not lay Lord Dorchester's instructions before the Executive Council of Upper Canada. Nor could he encourage his militia in any forelorn hope. It was absurd to have enticed settlers to Upper Canada if they might now be left to fend for themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Simcoe pursued the matter in a long despatch to Dundas of February 23, 1794, setting forth how the two Canadas might best be defended. A well constructed fort at the rapids on the Richelieu river would delay any American army advancing from Lake Champlain. British warships could carry supplies from Quebec to Montreal and harass any enemy who got that far. From Montreal to Oswego the St. Lawrence river was plagued by formidable rapids; but loyalists were settled along the north shore and there was as yet no American settlement across from them. The Provincial Marine's naval superiority on Lake Ontario also meant British control of the St. Lawrence above Oswego. The only weak spot was Kingston, whose harbour and fortifications were indefensible with the forces likely to be available,

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16. C.C. 42/313, Simcoe to Dundas, Dec. 17, 1793.

particularly during the winter when the lake was frozen from shore to shore and an invader could cross on the ice. The Bay of Quinté was settled with loyalists who would supply the more exposed portions of Upper Canada. The next settlement was York, which Simcoe regarded as being "the most important and defensible position in North America".<sup>17</sup> The settlement at Niagara he regarded as being the "Bulwar of Upper Canada". This despatch then went on to explain:

The general policy that has guided the present Government in the grant of Settlements is not to extend new and frontier, [settlements], but to encourage people to fill up the old ones; in particular Niagara and Kingston.

It has therefore as yet no new grants below Fort Erie, it being advisable to Garrison Long Point, the Harbour and Arsenal, of that Lake before the Settlements shall be extended thither.

Simcoe's preference would be to withdraw theetroit settlement across that river and eventually build up the population of the Thames river valley, where he suggested locating the provincial capital. The several harbours on

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17. Ibid., Feb. 23, 1794.

Lakes Ontario and Erie could be protected by blockhouses, manned by local militia.

Dundas, however, had already answered Dorchester's despatch of October 25, 1793 along a different vein.

Dundas was hopeful that the Americans and Indians would settle their differences. He agreed with Lord Dorchester that peace was essential for both Canada and the United States. Therefore, his letter of January 8, 1794 continued:

...it becomes exceedingly necessary, that the most conciliatory and friendly Disposition, consistent with the Safety and Preservation of the Posts in His Majesty's Possessions, should be demonstrated in all matters of dispute and Discussion with the Americans collectively, or individually....

As it is very likely that the Americans... may think the present moment affords a favourable juncture to press forward their claims in a more urgent manner than heretofore, it becomes a matter of still greater moment, to allay, or keep back, by every possible means, all such matters of Dispute, as may intervene between the present moment, and that of a final arrangement between this Country & the States, which, I trust, is at no great distance. Should the King's Service in the West Indies be crowned with that

Success; which may reasonably be expected, the Strength & Situation of His Majesty's Land & Sea Forces in that Quarter will strongly counteract any Ideas that may be entertained in America, that the present is a favourable juncture for pressing matters on their side of the question, which ought to be the objects of a mutual and final arrangement. It is not however on these, or any other accounts, the less necessary, that your Lordship & Lieut. Govr. Simcoe should exert your utmost endeavours to put the militia of the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada upon as respectable a footing as possible: for the use of which militia, a proper supply of arms, ammunition and accoutrements will be sent from hence to Quebec, by the earliest ships of the ensuing Season.

From the Dispatches which I have received from Lieut. Govr. Simcoe, I look upon a Naval Force, properly constructed for the Lakes, as a matter of great future Import and Consequence, as tending to form the most natural & efficient, as well as the cheapest mode of defence for the Province of Upper Canada. I therefore think that immediate attention should be paid to the gradual formation of a Naval Force on the Lakes.<sup>18</sup>

A subsequent letter to Simcoe suggested that his militia should be made liable to serve on the Great Lakes.<sup>19</sup> This

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18. C.O. 42/98, Dundas to Dorchester, Jan. 8, 1794.

19. C.O. 42/318, Dundas to Simcoe, March 16, 1794.

was incorporated into the supplementary Militia Act passed by the Legislature of Upper Canada at its next session.<sup>20</sup>

Another letter from Dundas assured Simcoe that Lord Dorchester had been wrong to suggest that Upper Canada might have to be abandoned.<sup>21</sup> Dorchester had been authorized to recruit his regular regiments locally to a strength of 600 rank and file each, since none of the men being recruited in the United Kingdom could be spared as reinforcements. He was also to raise two battalions of Royal Canadian Volunteers for service only in the Canadas. Each battalion was to consist of 750 men, organized in 10 companies.<sup>22</sup> Since the more substantial settlers were not interested in a humdrum military existence, neither battalion ever got within 300 men of its authorized establishment. According to Lieutenant-General Peter Hunter's subsequent report:

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20. 34 Geo. III, Cap. 7.

21. C.O. 42/31<sup>2</sup>, Dundas to Simcoe, May 11, 1794.

22. C.O. 42/98, Dundas to Dorchester, Feb. 15, 1794.

In both Battalions there are a very considerable number of old men, and many others too feeble to undergo the fatigue of Military Service.

From what I have observed of their discipline, but little can be said in their favor, this arises principally from a want of experience and Military knowledge in their Officers.

... notwithstanding the advantages of being officered, without exception by native Canadians, or Gentlemen resident in the Country, and having received a bounty of ten guineas per man, exclusive of the privilege of being enlisted for three years only or during the War, such is the dislike the Canadians have to a military life, that it will (in my humble opinion) be impossible to complete them; another circumstance operates very strongly against their ever being completed; the very high price of labour in both the Canadas, particularly in the Upper Country, where a common labourer seldom receives less than a dollar a day, and at some seasons of the year, often more. 23

Rumours reaching Montreal that an American invasion of Lower Canada was scheduled for the spring of 1794, coincident with the arrival of a French fleet in the St. Lawrence River, caused Lord Dorchester to order 2,000 militia to be ready, on four days' notice, to move to assembly points. The English-speaking element in Montreal and Quebec "came forward with great alacrity," but the

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23. C.O. 42/324, Hunter to Portland, Oct. 25, 1799.

habitants again showed their unwillingness to be involved in someone else's quarrel.<sup>24</sup> Dorchester quickly recovered confidence when no enemy appeared and soon reverted to his favourite theme by crediting the attitude displayed by French-speaking militiamen to "a long disuse of Military Services, rather than to a spirit of discontent or disloyalty".<sup>25</sup>

Lord Dorchester's inflammatory speech of February 10, 1794, to an assembly of western Indians at Quebec, intended to convince them that they would have British support in a forthcoming war against the Americans, and his subsequent order that Fort Detroit's communication with Lake Erie should be protected by the construction of a fort at the rapids on the Maumee River, now led to a tense situation in the interior.<sup>26</sup> Receiving word of Major-General Wayne's advance into the Old Northwest in early August with his Legion of the United States and a

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24. C.C. 42/101, Dorchester to Dundas, May 24, 1794.

25. Ibid.

26. A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp. 133-137.

force of militia, Simcoe ordered the Canadian militia at Detroit to reinforce the small British garrison of Fort Miami and called out a further 200 militia in the western District of Upper Canada.<sup>27</sup> On the morning of August 20, however, Wayne vanquished the Indians at Fallen Timbers, within gunshot sound of Fort Miami whose garrison carefully continued inside. Wayne could easily have reduced Fort Miami, but he knew that President Washington did not want war and that Chief Justice John Jay was even then in London to negotiate a settlement of all outstanding Anglo-American differences. Jay's Treaty signed on November 19, 1794 provided for British surrender of the disputed posts by June 1, 1796 and openly left the Indians in the lurch at long last. Thus the Indians had to accept the Treaty of Greenville offered to them by Major-General Wayne on August 3, 1795 and withdraw from the Ohio country which now became available for American settlement. As far as Upper Canada was concerned, the possibility of danger from the United States now seemed to be at an end. Consequently the two regiments of foot were withdrawn, to leave less than 500 rank and file of the Queen's Rangers and the loyal Canadian Volunteers to garrison Kingston, York,

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27. C.O. 42/318, Simcoe to Portland, Oct. 24, 1794.

Fort Erie, and the replacement forts which had to be constructed on Canadian territory: Fort George across the river from Fort Niagara, Fort Malden at Amherstburg on the Detroit River, and Fort St. Joseph on the island of that name at the mouth of the St. Mary's River.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, during the early summer of 1794, the British garrison and French inhabitants of Saint-Jermain-et-Liquelon had been evacuated. This made it possible to send a regular detachment of one officer and 50 other ranks for the protection of Cap Breton.<sup>29</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Edmund Fanning of St. John's Island was now busy trying to recruit a belatedly authorized two-company provincial corps for local defence against possible predatory raids, but would never manage to recruit more than half the authorized 200 men.<sup>30</sup> The King's New Brunswick Regiment had managed to recruit 400 other ranks.<sup>31</sup>

28. C/1200, Russell to Prescott, Aug. 20, 1796.

29. C/245, Ogilvie to Dorchester, May 5, 1794.

30. C.C. 226/14, Dundas to Fanning, Feb. 7, 1794; C.O. 226/15, "A detail of various Transactions at Prince Edward Island, and in particular the Conduct of Certain persons entrusted with the Affairs of Government on that Island submitted to Mr. Vansittart at the Treasury and Mr. Sullivan at the Secretary of State's office by J. Hill, a Proprietor," n.d.

1795. 31. C.O. 108/6, Carleton to Portland, Sept. 10,

Despite the fact that the Royal Nova Scotia Regiment was fated to remain about 230 rank and file below its authorized strength of 800, H.R.H. Edward, Duke of Kent, who had succeeded Brigadier-General Ogilvie in the military command at Halifax during the summer of 1794, considered it to be a useful corps.<sup>32</sup> Rumours originating in New York that a French fleet was preparing for an attack on Halifax, prompted the enthusiastic young royal duke to undertake an extensive improvement of its harbour defences. Two regiments of the Halifax militia and a detachment from the volunteer artillery company were embodied, with the more prosperous members of the latter labouring on the fortifications without pay.<sup>33</sup> During May, 1795 another 600 militia were embodied for six months work as labourers at army rates of pay, but the more prosperous citizens selected by ballot now bought substitutes from the city's casual labourers, making these unavailable for employment

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32. C.O. 217/71, Kentworth to King, April 1, 1795.

33. C.O. 217/71, Kentworth to Portland, Dec. 20, 1794.

as civilians by the Commanding Royal Engineer.<sup>34</sup> Less than 500 men could be provided during the summer of 1797. A disgusted Duke of Kent then reported to the Home Secretary that the average regular soldier did as much work as three militiamen and suggested that the answer would be to send him reinforcements from Great Britain. Never again did he want to have to embody militiamen as labourers:

...for on the one hand, the Country is by far too new, and too thinly settled to admit of even so small a number as that called upon this season to be absent from their homes, without their families being materially injured by the measure; while on the other, the laws by which they are governed when embodied, are so totally inefficient, that it is next to an impossibility to enforce any kind of control or subordination, which they are not willing to submit to. In fact, had I not indulged them in almost every point and overlooked almost every irregularity, it would have been impracticable to have got them to do, even the little we were able to effect. The expense attending the measure of embodying them, is certainly far from being attended with that proportionate good which it ought to produce.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Ibid., April 18 and June 24, 1795.

35. C.O. 217/71, Kent to Fortland, Nov. 7, 1797.

Fortunately the situation was soon eased by the arrival at Halifax of the 6th Regiment of Foot.

Rumours of a French fleet cruising off Newfoundland had also been creating excitement among the habitants of Lower Canada. During December, 1796, a British warship captured a French vessel carrying Ira Allen and a cargo of 15,000 muskets and 20 light field guns for the Vermont militia. At Quebec it was naturally believed that an invasion of Lower Canada was being contemplated. Spies and hostile agents were thought to be infesting the province and alarm lessened only after the public execution of David McLane for treason at Quebec on July 21, 1797.<sup>36</sup>

Even a year later Lieutenant-General Robert Prescott, now Governor-in-Chief and Commander of the Forces, was still nervous. His three regiments of regulars in Lower Canada totalled only 2,034 rank and file, while the 424 rank and file of the 1st Battalion of Royal Canadian Volunteers were mostly French-speaking Canadians and thus not to be relied on. "Quebec must be taken care of", he wrote the Home Secretary on August 22, 1798, "and at Montreal a considerable Force must necessarily be stationed to awe the Habitants of that vicinity who have in more than

<sup>36</sup>. J. E. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp. 170-177.

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one Instance evinced a refractory Spirit".<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, however, a French royalist agent reported to Prescott that, although the habitants generally were anxious to see Canada restored to France, they were inclined to continue their passive attitude. The last French spy had been withdrawn, pending a reconsideration of policy by the Directory in Paris.<sup>38</sup>

General Napoleon Bonaparte, who overthrew the Directory on November 9, 1797, was too busy to give Canada more than a passing thought. Soon the arrival in Lower Canada of 50 émigre French clergy to relieve the shortage of parish priests helped further to distill in the habitants a distrust of the anti-religious French revolutionary regime.

A new Lieutenant-Governor of Lower Canada, Sir Robert Shore Milnes, seemed to impress the French-speaking inhabitants by the interest he took in them as militiamen.

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37. C.O. 42/111, Prescott to Portland, Aug. 22, 1798.

38. A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain North America, p. 177.

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In any event, enough of them came forward willingly when one-eighth of them were ordered to be embodied and armed during October, 1801, in response to further reports from Vermont of invasion. There were even a considerable number of volunteers.<sup>39</sup>

Consequent upon the Peace Treaty signed at Amiens on March 27, 1802, the French threat to the widespread British Empire came to an end. The British Government promptly reduced the strength of the regular regiments in North America and disbanded the several provincial corps; the Queen's Rangers also was disbanded. The garrisons of Nova Scotia and Its Dependencies now consisted of only two small artillery companies, the 29th Regiment and the 5th Battalion of the 60th Regiment, with a total of 43 officers and 1,177 other ranks.<sup>40</sup> The garrison of Lower Canada was now only 1,000 rank and file of the 6th and 41st Regiments of Foot. The posts in Upper Canada were protected by only the 49th Regiment. Four small companies of Royal

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39. C.O. 42/117, Milnes to Hobart, Oct. 28, 1801.

40. C.O. 217/78, Bowyer to Hobart, Aug. 16, 1803.

Artillery still continued in the Canadas.<sup>41</sup> Here it might be noted that the United States Army had earlier been reduced; its actual strength was now only 248 officers and 3,749 enlisted men.<sup>42</sup>

Peace in Europe turned out to be only a breather, since Napoleon persisted in a policy of piecemeal aggrandizement in spite of British protests. Therefore Great Britain declared war on May 16, 1803. In view of the impossibility of reinforcing the British troops in North America from home, Field-Marshal H.R.H. Frederick, Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief of all His Majesty's Forces, authorized the organization of fencible regiments for each of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Canada.<sup>43</sup> Since Prince Edward Island and Cape Breton were defenceless, except for a "small and dispers'd Body of unarm'd and undisciplin'd Militia", an officer and 22 other ranks of the 5/60th Regiment were sent to each from Halifax to prevent their seats of government being

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41. C.O. 42/122, Milnes to Hobart, June 24, 1803.

42. Emory Upton, The Military Policy of the United States, p. 89.

43. C/718, York to Hunter, Aug. 1, 1803.

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"insulted" by privateers or other enemy raiders.<sup>44</sup> Danger to the maritime provinces did not materialize, because the Royal Navy was already strong in North American waters and would be generally considered omnipotent following the victory over the French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar in 1805 and the capture of the Danish Navy at Copenhagen in 1807.<sup>45</sup> Therefore it did not matter for the moment that none of the fencible regiments was able to recruit its authorized 1,070 rank and file.<sup>46</sup>

Although the Canadian Fencibles was able to recruit only 124 men in three years and thus could not even be placed on the army establishment as an effective corps,<sup>47</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Milnes of Lower Canada managed to form a total of seven volunteer militia companies at Montreal, Quebec and Trois-Rivières.<sup>48</sup> Milnes realized that it would

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44. C.O. 217/78, Bowyer to Hobart, Aug. 16, 1803.

45. S.W. Roskill, The Strategy of Sea Power, op. cit., pp. 82-83.

46. C/795, York to Peter, Aug. 8, 1803.

47. C/795, Castlereagh to Brock, April 25, 1807; Calvert to Shank, April 28, 1807.

48. C.O. 42/121, Milnes to Hobart, June 10, 1803.

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be too much to expect the habitants to remain loyal to Britain in the event that a French fleet should appear in the St. Lawrence River. He did, however, feel that they were much more "reconciled" to British rule than at any former time, and that they would serve against Americans should there be a renewed threat of danger from the south.<sup>49</sup>

This threat was revived after H.M.S. Leopard attacked U.S.S. Chesapeake at sea on June 22, 1807 for refusing to permit a search for British deserters. The death of three Americans, the wounding of 18 others, and the removal of four alleged deserters from a crippled Chesapeake united American public opinion in a demand for war against Great Britain.

Although a United States Navy had been authorized by Congress in 1794 and there had been sea-actions during the undeclared naval war with France (1798-1800) and the War with Tripoli (1801-1805), there were now only two frigates and four smaller war vessels in commission. This was because President Jefferson was enamoured with the idea

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49. C.O. 42/122, Milnes to Hobart, June 24, 1803.

that gunboats could provide a more satisfactory defence of the American coast and harbours than frigates and ships of the line, and at a fraction of the cost.<sup>50</sup> Thus any attack against British North America would have to be made overland.

As temporary Commander of the Forces in the Canadas, Colonel Isaac Brock requested the elderly Administrator of the Government of Lower Canada, Thomas Dunn, to call out sufficient of the militia to repair the defences of the province and to train for any emergency. Mindful of past disorders when the militia had been called upon, Dunn and his Executive Council managed to avoid doing anything until August 20. He then issued an order that one-fifth of the militia, or about 10,000 men, should be drafted by ballot and hold themselves in readiness for actual service. Bishop Flessis of Quebec followed with a mandement which was read in all the churches of his diocese. According to the Quebec Mercury of August 31:

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50. Harold and Margaret Sprout, The Rise of American Naval Power 1776-1918, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1939, pp. 33-62.

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The first draught was, in consequence, made, on the Esplanade, from the first battalion, of the Canadian militia, on Tuesday [25th August], from the second battalion on Friday, and from the British battalion, by ballot, yesterday. We should be wanting in justice to our compatriots did we say less than that, never, on a similar occasion, could there be manifested more cheerfulness, alacrity and zeal, than were shewn on these occasions, as well by the Canadians as by the British. Numbers volunteered their services. The Artillery company, the two flank companies, and Captain Burns's battalion company, who are the strongest and best disciplined of the British, have, to a man, formally tendered their services. Sums of money were offered by individuals, for prize-tickets, for such the tickets were called which, in balloting, were for service. Some young batchelors procured prize-tickets from the married men, who had drawn for service; but the greater part of the latter insisted on keeping their tickets, notwithstanding that offers of exchange were made to them by other batchelors.

Too much praise cannot be given to the animating language of the field-officers and others, in their speeches, addressed to the different battalions and companies, on the occasion. The whole has been attended with much festivity and hilarity.

We hear that equal cheerfulness and ardour have manifested themselves in the different country parishes.

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The only "gross instance of misbehaviour and insubordination" occurred in the parish of L'Assomption of the Montreal district.<sup>51</sup> This was immediately suppressed and the culprits sentenced by a Montreal court to 12 months' imprisonment and fines ranging from five to 10 pounds.<sup>52</sup>

Actuality, however, hardly justified the laudatory Militia General Order of September 9 thanking the militia for "coming forward in the Cause of a justly beloved Sovereign, and in support of a Form of Government, which has been proved by Experience to be the best calculated for promoting the Happiness and securing the Liberties of Mankind". A disgusted Colonel Brock pointed out that nothing had been done:

The men thus selected for service being scattered along an extensive line of four or five hundred miles, unarmed and totally unacquainted with every thing military, without officers capable of giving them instruction, considerable time would naturally be required before the necessary degree of order and discipline could be introduced among them.<sup>53</sup>

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51. The Quebec Gazette, Sept. 10, 1807.

52. Ibid., Nov. 10, 1807.

53. Ferdinand Brock Tupper (ed.), The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, K.B., London, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1847, p. 65.

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Lieutenant-Governor Francis Gore of Upper Canada hastened down to Montreal to consult Brock, but all he could get was a promise that 4,000 stands of arms would be sent forthwith from Quebec.<sup>54</sup> In the meantime there were practically no muskets available for his untrained militia. Therefore on October 7 Gore wrote Lord Castlereagh, now Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, that he was refraining from calling out any part of his militia, "that the Americans may not be made acquainted with our weakness".<sup>55</sup>

On October 18 Lieutenant-General Sir James Craig arrived at Quebec to assume the long vacant appointments of "Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief in and over the Provinces of Upper & Lower Canada, New-Brunswick, Nova-Scotia, and the Islands of Prince-Edward and Cape Breton, and their several Dependencies, Vice-Admiral of the same, Lieutenant General and Commander of all his Majesty's Forces in the Provinces of Lower and Upper Canada, Nova-Scotia & New Brunswick, and the Islands of Prince Edward, Cape Breton, Newfoundland and the Bermudas". Although no

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54. Ibid., p. 66.

55. C.O. 42/347, Gore to Castlereagh, Oct. 7, 1807.

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reinforcements could be expected from the British Isles, to follow the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion which had come as earlier scheduled, the arrival shortly from Halifax of the 98th Regiment of Foot and the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry did strengthen Craig's hand. His secret instructions from Lord Castlereagh, dated September 1, were quite specific. They commenced by expressing the hope that the crisis might be resolved amicably. If not, the British Government would adopt the "most vigorous & Energetic Measures" to bring the United States to their senses.<sup>56</sup> Castlereagh's instructions continued as follows:

From the inferiority of the Americans in Naval Power & impossibility they must find of contending with His Majesty's Arms at Sea, it may naturally be their hope to make some compensation for the Maritime Losses they may experience by attacking His Majesty's American Provinces; - and as under the circumstances of extended Warfare in which His Majesty is engaged it will not be possible to send a numerous Force across the Atlantic for their Protection, the extended Frontier of these Provinces certainly presents an opening for a favorable Invasion. It appears however that there are only two Capital Objects which would fully repay the Expense and Danger of an Expedition.

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56. C.O. 43/22, Castlereagh to Craig, Sept. 1, 1807.

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One the Seizure of the Town and Harbour of Halifax in Nova Scotia which would deprive His Majesty's Fleets of the most important Naval Station in the North American Continent; the other the capture of the Fortress of Quebec which would place them in the Sovereignty of His Majesty's Canadian Possessions.

Since Craig was to proceed to Quebec and might not be able to communicate with Halifax that autumn, Lord Castlereagh was sending separate instructions for the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia and the Commander of the Forces in that District to take "the best Measures in their power for placing Halifax in a state of Defence". The militia of both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were to be armed and trained. In the event that New Brunswick was invaded by an overwhelming American force, the troops were to retreat into Nova Scotia with as many of the militia as possible in order to strengthen Halifax. Craig's own course of action respecting the defence of the Canadas was to be as follows:

...your first object will be to preserve Quebec to which all other Considerations must be subordinate; If the American States shall make a serious Effort to get entire possession of these Provinces and to enter them with a Force it may be

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impossible to detach from hence so large a Body of Regular Troops as would enable you to meet their army in the Field and entirely to defeat and expel it - It may however be a Measure beyond the power of the American States, to bring at an early period a sufficient Force properly appointed which could reduce the Fortress of Quebec if resolutely defended, before means of succor could be sent from England - and in this consideration of the Subject I am to signify to you His Majesty's Pleasure, that in the Event of Hostilities with the United States you do not omit any Exertion by which the Situation of Quebec may be strengthened or secured & its defence protracted to the utmost.

In the event of no Hostilities taking place you will nevertheless take the most immediate Measures for having the Works completed which are necessary for enclosing the Body of the Place and constructing the Casements connected with them.

With regard to the building of a Citadel or carrying permanent Works to the heights of Abraham, there will be time to receive your Opinion respecting their necessity or propriety before the other and more necessary Works can be finished.

Respecting the Province of Upper Canada and the defence of it as the Command of all its Military Means will be under your authority I shall leave to your discretion the extent of the resistance you may think it prudent then to make in case the American States shall attack it in force.

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The Militia of that Province is under the Command of the Civil Government whilst you are absent, but I have signified to the Lieutenant Governor His Majesty's Pleasure that he should conform to All Recommendations he shall receive from you on the subject of the Militia, and, after giving you every Information in his power on the Subject, that he should defer to your Judgement and Instructions not only in what relates to the Militia but to whatever may relate to the Defence of the Province, or the Intercourse of its Government with that of the United States. You will of course in exercising this power committed to you consider the Situation of the Lieutenant Governor, and in the formation of your Measures take care to uphold his necessary authority.

A similar situation existed, in practice, with respect to the ordinary management of the Indian Department in Upper Canada; but the Lieutenant-Governor had been directed to follow Craig's instructions implicitly.

The balance of Castlereagh's directive was devoted chiefly to raising volunteer companies and independent companies of regulars, which Craig might attempt if circumstances warranted. Considering the reputation which Craig was later to acquire in Lower Canada, Castlereagh's remarks on what action he should take to breathe life into its militia are most relevant:

With regards to the British part of the Population there will be little difficulty, the inducing the French Canadians to embody themselves is a

subject of much delicacy, as they have in general hitherto shewn themselves averse from taking any active part. I must leave the arrangement of this nice subject to your powers of Management and conciliation, and you will be particularly cautious as far as possible to prevent, any Jealousies arising between His Majesty's English and French Subjects.

Since it was now too close to winter for the Americans to think of invading Canada, Craig merely issued a Militia General Order on November 24, warning the inhabitants of Lower Canada to be on their guard against strangers and directing that "the portion of the Militia, amounting to one-fifth, directed to be balloted for ... is to continue to hold itself in readiness, to assemble on the shortest notice".

During <sup>D</sup>ecember the arrival in Upper Canada of the 4,000 stands of arms promised by Brock made it feasible for Lieutenant-Governor Gore to order his militia to be balloted for training. According to a letter written by an inhabitant of Kingston on January 3, 1808:

Our militia has been mustered, and arms issued out to them, also every fourth man draughted, which draughts are to keep themselves in Constant readiness, in case Jonathan should attempt an invasion. We are now learning the Exercise and are

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drilled twice a Week by a Sergeant from the Garrison — and are already much improved Considering our Awkwardness....57

That same day, January 3, Gore finally received a letter from Sir James Craig, outlining his defence plans. These, Craig had written:

... point out the preservation of Quebec as the object of my first and principal consideration, and that to which all others must be subordinate. It is the only Post, defective as it is in many respects, that can be considered tenable for a moment, nor is the preservation of it of less consequence to the Province under your immediate direction, than it is to this, as affording the only door for the future entry of that force which it might be found expedient and which the King's Government might be then able to send for the recovery of both or either... for if the Americans are really determined to attack these Provinces, and employ those means which they may so easily command, I fear it would be vain for us to flatter ourselves with the hopes of making any effectual defence of the open country, unless powerfully assisted from home.58

Craig suggested sending into Upper Canada the loyal militia of Lower Canada and any regulars not required for the defence of Quebec. These, and Gore's troops and militia,

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57. Richard A. Preston (ed.), Kingston before the War of 1812, Toronto, Champlain Society, 1959, p. 256.

58. C.O. 42/136, Craig to Gore, Dec. 6, 1807.

might then harry the rear of the American invasion army which, after having occupied Montreal, would likely be moving down river to attack Quebec.

In Gore's reply of January 5, he agreed that the whole disposable force in Upper Canada might be so employed. Since the Americans had no war vessels on the Great Lakes, he could retain naval supremacy there. Obviously it would be impracticable to defend Upper Canada against anything except a "partial or sudden incursion"; but this truth "must be carefully concealed from Persons of almost every description in this colony, for there are few People here that would act with Energy were it not for the purpose of defending the lands which they actually possess".<sup>59</sup> In order to give effect to such a policy of co-operation with Lower Canada, the consolidated Militia Act approved by the Legislature of Upper Canada on March 16 provided a similar clause to that existing in the militia legislation of Lower Canada since 1793:

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59. C.O. 42/136, Gore to Craig, Jan. 5, 1808.

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... it shall not be lawful to order the militia or any part thereof, to march out of this Province, except for the assistance of the Province of Lower Canada, (when the same shall actually be invaded or in a state of insurrection) or except in pursuit of an enemy who may have invaded this Province, and except also for the destruction of any vessel or vessels built or building, or any depot or magazine, formed or forming, or for the attack of any enemy who may be embodying or marching for the purpose of invading this Province, or for the attack of any fortification now erected, or which may be hereafter erected, to cover the invasion thereof. 60

By this time Craig had received Lord Castlereagh's letter of January 22, 1808, which had been brought overland by courier from Halifax to Quebec. Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost was being sent to Nova Scotia with three regiments totalling nearly 2,300 rank and file of the British Army. Whether or not further reinforcements should be sent to British North America would depend on how the situation developed. Castlereagh's letter emphasized that "a great proportion of the Effort should be made by the People of the Country themselves".<sup>61</sup> Six "unattached and intelligent" lieutenant-colonels were

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60. 48 Geo. III, Chap. 1.

61. C.O. 42/136, Castlereagh to Craig, Jan. 22, 1808.

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being sent to Quebec and four to Halifax to serve as Inspecting Field Officers of Militia. They were to supervise the training of 12,000 militia in the Canadas and 8,000 in the maritime provinces, and possibly command militia brigades on active service. Furthermore, Craig was directed:

... lose no time in establishing a concert with Sir George Prevost, by which, in the event of an attack being directed against the Canadas, a due proportion of the Force stationed in Nova Scotia may move to your Support, and vice-versa, should the latter Province be the object of attack. In order to facilitate this transfer of force the Tonnage which carries the three Regiments to Halifax will have orders to remain on that Station at your disposal.

Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost reached Halifax and became Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, as well as military commander of the whole maritime area, on April 23. By now the seaward defences of Halifax were adequate, but the land fortifications to its rear still needed strengthening and there was as yet no permanent fortress on Citadel Hill.<sup>62</sup> Prevost immediately dismissed the 2,000 militia embodied in Nova Scotia during the previous autumn and reported that the New Brunswick embodied militia would also be sent to their

<sup>62</sup> W.O. 55/1558(4) contains copies of the reports and drawings intended to correct this situation.

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homes as soon as the 101st Regiment of Foot reached there from Halifax. Companies of the New Brunswick Fencibles would then be sent to garrison each of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island.<sup>63</sup>

Craig had not despatched any confidential reports to London because letters sent via the overland route from Quebec to Halifax during the winter months might be captured by American raiding parties.<sup>64</sup> So it was May 12 before he wrote Lord Castlereagh about Quebec itself:

... I should begin by observing that as a Fortress I found this place extremely deficient under almost every point of view, in which as such it was to be considered, especially as connected with its relative importance to the ultimate security of that part of His Majesty's Dominions. The situation is in itself highly unfavourable, the ground rising in front of the works so as to afford a very dangerous command on them, while on both flanks, on the opposite sides of the two Rivers, but particularly on the further bank of the St. Charles, positions present themselves from which they could be swept in flank & even in reverse. The Works in themselves, for the most part, are in a ruinous State -- the masonry of the walls, however good it may originally have been, is from the nature of the materials employed

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63. C/178, Prevost to Craig, April 11, 1808.

64. C.O. 42/136, Craig to Castlereagh, Jan. 11, 1808.

now rotten, no ditch or any counterscarp, by which the foot of the wall can be protected, and no outworks except in front of Cape Diamond where even those that appear to me the most material are in a state of ruin.

There is not a casement or single spot which would afford security to the sick or men off duty....<sup>65</sup>

Since the extent of the immediate danger was not certain, there was no point planning permanent and costly fortifications at this time. The Commanding Royal Engineer, Lieutenant-Colonel R.H. Bruyeres, had devised a minimum programme. New construction would be limited to four martello towers spread across the Plains of Abraham, and a similar tower on each of the far bank of the St. Charles River and on Point Lévis, to prevent the existing defences being outflanked by enemy batteries. A proper Citadel for Cape Diamond would have to wait.

In an effort to increase the Canadian Fencibles to a usable strength, Craig ordered from the Canadas the recruiting parties of the New Brunswick Fencibles, which were offering a larger bounty to recruits.<sup>66</sup> On June 14

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65. Ibid., May 12, 1808.

66. Correspondence on C/718.

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approval was given at the Horse Guards for the Canadian Fencibles to be placed upon the establishment of the Army whenever there should be 400 rank and file, with the usual proportion of officers and non-commissioned officers.<sup>67</sup> This strength was achieved during the autumn.<sup>68</sup>

By then the crisis caused by the Chesapeake affair had blown over. President Jefferson and his Republican Party supporters were convinced that both Britain and France could be coerced into leaving neutral shipping alone by purely economic measures, so an Embargo Act had been put into effect as early as December 22, 1807. This put a legal end to virtually all American international trade. Yet Congress proceeded to authorize an increase of five regiments of infantry and one each of riflemen, light artillery, and dragoons to the United States Army, so foreign observers did not know what to think. All Lord Castlereagh could do on June 3, 1808 was to write Sir James Craig as follows:

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67. C/795, Gordon to Craig, June 14, 1808.

68. C/795, Strength Return, Nov. 11, 1808.

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Altho' tho' no definitive Settlement has taken place with those States yet the fair and conciliating conduct of His Majesty contrasted with that of France seems to have produced such a general Impression upon the Government as well as on the People, that it does not appear to me probable, that they will proceed to hostilities unless some new or unforeseen cause of rupture shall unexpectedly occur.<sup>69</sup>

Napoleon, although he had sold Louisiana to the United States in 1803, was once again believed to be contemplating intervention in the New World. Sir James Craig began to have visions of French agents reviving old alliances and unloosing Indians upon the "defenceless frontier of Upper Canada".<sup>70</sup> Therefore, as he wrote to Lieutenant-Governor Gore, it was more imperative than ever to win back the Indians. Yet, he cautioned, "the means that are pursued should be such as are of general conciliation and attachment without any particular allusion for the present to any possible state of hostilities with Americans".<sup>71</sup>

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69. C.O. 42/136, Castlereagh to Craig, June 3, 1808.

70. C.O. 42/136, Craig to Erskine, May 13, 1808.

71. C.O. 42/136, Craig to Gore, May 11, 1808.

As far as Craig was concerned, cancellation of the arms shipment earlier ordered to Quebec was a convenient excuse not to call out the militia of Lower Canada for training during the summer of 1808. That Craig had already strengthened his prejudice against French-speaking Canadians, and considered that Lower Canada was a conquered province to be ruled for the benefit of its English-speaking commercial minority, seems evident from his despatch of August 4 to Lord Castlereagh:

...whatever may have been the case in former times the Canadian of the present day is not warlike or at all accustomed to arms. Nothing indeed can exceed the prejudices and absurd ideas that prevail among them. The Militia Service is ever in their mouths, they bring it forward as a merit on every occasion and, they seem to wish to be thought proud of belonging to it; but they have not the most distant idea of being Soldiers, or the slightest desire of becoming such, they have indeed an invincible abhorrence for the subordination and restraint that would be necessary for training them, and I have strong doubts whether they will ever be brought to submit to them.<sup>72</sup>

That Gore was almost as pessimistic about the loyalty of the population of Upper Canada, but for an entirely different reason, is evident from the much quoted letter he had sent to Craig on January 5, 1808:

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1808. 72. C.O. 42/136, Craig to Castlereagh, Aug. 4,

I think I may venture to state that the generality of the Inhabitants from Kingston to the borders of the lower province may be depended upon, but I cannot venture, from the Industry that has been used by certain characters now and lately in this Province, to assert that the Inhabitants about the Seat of this Government [York], Niagara and Long Point are equally to be relied on. I have also to observe that excepting the Inhabitants of Glengarry and those Persons who have served in the American War and their Descendants, which form a considerable body of men, the residue of the Inhabitants of this colony consist chiefly of Persons who have emigrated from the States of America and of consequence, retain those ideas of equality and insurordination, much to the prejudice of this government, so prevalent in this country.<sup>73</sup>

In consequence, as soon as the immediate crisis was deemed over, all attempt at training the militia of Upper Canada came to an end. Thus the six Inspecting Field Officers recently arrived at Quebec found themselves with no active employment, a condition which was to continue and turn their appointments into pure sinecures.<sup>74</sup>

Sir James Craig's further military appreciation of his situation, dated February 13, 1809, dealt with possibilities rather than probabilities. "The Security of Quebec is unquestionably the first object in every point of

<sup>73</sup>. C.O. 42/136, Gore to Craig, Jan. 5, 1808.

<sup>74</sup>. Robert Christie, Interesting Public Documents and Official Correspondence, Illustrative of, and Supplementary to the History of Lower Canada, Vol. VI, Montreal, Jonathan Logan, 1855, p. 145.

view", he wrote; "while we retain possession of it, we have always a door open, by which we may be able to recover the Province altho' it affords no security against the loss of it."<sup>75</sup> He now suggested that it would be better, and cheaper in the long run, to make an initial attempt to defend both Canadas. The militia would make an effort to defend the interior, but they could not be organized from outside to help recover it. Upper Canada's best defence was the Great Lakes, where the Provincial Marine had no naval adversary. Unfortunately, war vessels could not similarly be placed on Lake Champlain, to help guard the approaches to Montreal, because there no longer was a fortified base at either Isle-aux-Noix or St. Johns. All the forts in both provinces had been "totally neglected" and so far Craig had limited new construction work to Quebec. In any case, his 5,500 regulars and fencibles were not nearly enough. What he needed was a reinforcement of 12,000 regulars -- 2,000 to garrison rebuilt forts in each of the Canadas and 8,000 to function as a field force.

Since the British Army was now heavily committed in Portugal, and a military expedition was being prepared for a landing on Walcheren, Craig would have to get along

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75. C.O. 42/138, Craig to Castlereagh, Feb. 13, 1809.

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with what he already had. This was the gist of Lord Castlereagh's very cautious reply on April 8, 1809:

The existing state of circumstances between Great Britain and the United States of America, tho' it presents hopes that a rupture may be prevented & all differences terminate in a peaceful adjustment; yet on the other hand prevents our desisting from those cautionary measures which the probability of a late favorable issue renders expedient.

I am therefore, to recommend you to persevere in the measures you are taking for strengthening Quebec, and for enabling you to avail yourself of the Militia Force of the Country, and should affairs take a more threatening aspect, proper means will be taken to augment your Force.

You will consider the judicious and conciliating line you have hitherto pursued and take the necessary care that the measures of Defence you advise or adopt shall not be misconstrued, and that any imprudence of Individuals be not made the ground of National misunderstanding or retaliation.<sup>76</sup>

Craig continued to do what he thought was best, but he was old and in poor health. Convinced that no good could be expected from the French-speaking inhabitants of Lower Canada and that war with the United States was not

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76. C.O. 42/138, Castlereagh to Craig, April 8, 1809.

far off, he requested permission to resign and make way for a younger man. Permission having been finally granted, Sir James Craig sailed for England on June 19, 1811. His designated successor, Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost who was serving at Halifax, did not reach Quebec until September 13, 1811. This three-month lag did not worry the British Government unduly, however, because of the belief that its Minister en route to Washington would be able to restore amicable Anglo-American relations without a repeal of its Orders in Council aimed at neutral traders.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE WAR OF 1812

Viewed from Canada, the situation developing in Washington appeared ominous. President Madison, in his opening message to Congress on November 5, 1811, asked for increases to the regular army, the acceptance of volunteer corps, an improvement in the navy, and an augmentation of the already satisfactory supply of cannon, muskets and ammunition. The younger Republicans<sup>in</sup>/the House of Representatives, representing agrarian interests in the south and west for the most part, clamoured for war with Great Britain, and were quickly dubbed "War Hawks". Even the most staunch Federalists were now less pro-British: France having claimed to have revoked the Berlin and Milan Decrees, they felt that Britain should cancel its Orders in Council aimed at neutral traders.

Considering that Britain was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with France and that there were many commitments in the far flung British Empire, the military manpower already available in North America was the most that Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost had any right to expect. The British regulars and fencibles

in Canada totalled roughly 5,600 effectives; but only about 1,200 of them were in Upper Canada and these were widely scattered in small garrisons.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-General Sir John Sherbrooke's subordinate command of Nova Scotia & Its Dependencies had a further 173 officers, and 4,889 other ranks.<sup>2</sup> Therefore Prevost revived the proposal to raise a fencible corps in Upper Canada. Its recruiting parties also visited the Scottish and Acadian settlements in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island during the winter and spring of 1812, so there was no real justification for calling it the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles.<sup>3</sup> The new Militia Act, which Prevost persuaded the Legislature of Lower Canada to pass in April, 1812 provided for the selection by ballot of 2,000 bachelors aged 18 to 25 and their embodiment

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1. W.O. 17/1516, Strength Return, Canada, Nov. 25, 1811.

2. W.O. 17/2358, Strength Return, Nova Scotia, Nov. 25, 1811.

3. Ferdinand Brock Tupper (ed.), The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, K.B., London, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1847, pp. 123 and 132-133.

for 90 days training in each of two successive summers, or their retention for a maximum of two years service in the event of war.<sup>4</sup> These would be known as Select Embodied Militia. Prevost also decided to raise a Provincial Corps of Light Infantry or Voltigeurs to serve during the "apprehended war" with the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The recently promoted Major-General Isaac Brock had less success with the Legislature of Upper Canada, of which he was now Administrator, because of the "great influence which the numerous settlers from the United States" possessed over the decisions of the Assembly and the prevalent belief that war was unlikely.<sup>6</sup> Supplementary clauses to the Militia Act did authorize the formation of flank companies of volunteers for each sedentary militia battalion, but a subsequent circular letter reduced the number of training days from six to three per month.<sup>7</sup>

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4. 52 Geo. III, Cap. I.

5. P.A.C., W.O.1/96, Prevost to Torrens, April 21, 1812.

6. F.B. Tupper, The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, op. cit., p. 153.

7. 52 Geo. III, Chap. III. Also the York Gazette, May 1, 1812.

Since assuming the government of Upper Canada, Brock had become convinced that the existing defensive concept should be modified. He disliked the possibility of having to abandon the province and had argued in a long letter of December 2, 1811 that a strong/<sup>stand</sup> should be made:

The military force which heretofore occupied the frontier posts being so inadequate to their defence, a general opinion prevailed that, in the event of hostilities, no opposition was intended. The late increase of ammunition and every species of stores, the substitution of a strong regiment [41st Foot], and the appointment of a military person to administer the government, have tended to infuse other sentiments among the most reflecting part of the community.<sup>8</sup>

If the western Indians were supplied by the British and encouraged to make war, Brock's letter then suggested, the Americans would be kept too busy to threaten Upper Canada:

But before we can expect an active co-operation on the part of the Indians, the reduction of Detroit and Michilimackinac must convince that people, who conceive themselves to have been sacrificed in 1794, to our policy, that we are earnestly engaged in the War.<sup>9</sup>

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8. C/673, Brock to Prevost, Dec. 2, 1811.

9. Ibid.

Continued naval supremacy on the Great Lakes was also essential for a successful defence of Upper Canada. Were this assured by the augmentation of the Provincial Marine on both Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, the only likely place for attack would be along the Niagara River, which the Americans could cross in small boats.

The instructions Prevost had recently received from the British Government, however, had been specific: he was not to commence offensive operations "except it be for the purpose of preventing or repelling Hostilities or unavoidable Emergencies".<sup>10</sup> On purely military grounds Prevost's reply to Brock agreed that there would be advantages in attacking Detroit and Michilimackinac while they were held only weakly, "rather than receiving the first blow".<sup>11</sup> At the moment, however, there seemed to be a distinct diversion of opinion in the United States towards the question of peace or war, so extreme care should be taken to avoid giving offence.

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10. C.O. 43/23, Prince Regent's Instructions to Prevost, Oct. 22, 1811.

11. C/1218, Prevost to Brock, Dec. 24, 1811.

Before Prevost had a chance to visit Upper Canada and draw his own conclusions, he received a letter from the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies requesting a detailed appreciation of the military situation in North America. Prevost's lengthy reply, dated May 18, is summarized in the following paragraphs.

Upper Canada was garrisoned by about 1,200 British regulars. The most westerly fort on St. Joseph's Island could be considered only as a "Post of assemblage for friendly Indians, and in some degree a protection for the North West Fur Trade".<sup>12</sup> Repairs were being hurried at Fort Malden at Amherstburg, which was the Provincial Marine's base on the upper lakes as well as being a "place of reunion" for Indians. Fort Erie, Chippawa and Fort George protected the line of communication between Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. Upon the outbreak of war it would be well to capture the opposing Fort Niagara and thus secure the safe navigation of the Niagara River. Nothing had yet been done to fortify York, which was the provincial capital, but it was a "retired situation from the American frontier". Kingston

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12. C.O. 42/146, Prevost to Liverpool, May 18, 1812.

was "exposed to sudden attack, which, if successful, would cut off communication between the Upper and Lower Province and deprive us of our naval resources". Yet its garrison consisted of only four companies of the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion, totalling less than 200 effectives. In view of the populous American settlements now spread along the eastern end of Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River, it would be advisable to establish well above the rapids, at Prescott, a strong post for regulars and militia. The total number of militia in Upper Canada was calculated at 11,000 men, "of which it might not be prudent to arm more than 4,000".<sup>13</sup>

In Lower Canada the British Army had roughly 4,400 effectives. In addition the Glengarry Light Infantry Fencibles and the Canadian Voltigeurs were busy training their recruits. The militia of Lower Canada amounted to 60,000 men, "a mere posse, ill armed, and without discipline, whereof 2,000 are embodied for training" [in four battalions of Select Embodied Militia]. Since the commercial centre of Montreal would likely be the first object of attack, and lacked any means of

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13. Ibid.

defence, British troops would have to maintain an "impenetrable line on the South Shore, extending from La Prairie to Chambly, with a sufficient Flotilla to command the Rivers St. Lawrence and the Richelieu". The ruins at St. John's and Chambly were not really defensible positions, but the field works at William Henry (or Sorel) were about to be improved, since this was a rendezvous for naval vessels patrolling the St. Lawrence River.

According to Prevost:

From thence down the St. Lawrence are many excellent positions for arresting the progress of an Enemy marching on either Shore upon Quebec, particularly if he is not in possession of the navigation of the River ....

Quebec is the only permanent Fortress in the Canadas: - It is the Key to the whole and must be maintained: - To the final defence of this position, every other Military operation ought to become subservient and the retreat of the Troops upon Quebec must be the primary consideration: - The means of resistance afforded by the Fortifications in their present imperfect State, are not such as could justify a hope of its being able to withstand a vigorous and well conducted siege. It requires Bomb proof Casements for the Troops, as the Town is completely commanded from the South Shore at Point Levi, a position which it has been frequently recommended to occupy in force: - The Casements ought to be erected on Cape Diamond, a position that points itself out for a Citadel: - It is advisable that the whole circumference of the summit of this Hill should be occupied, being the only elevation within the Walls and commanded by

the height of Land on the plains of Abraham: - Such a Work would essentially defend the extensive Line of Fortification, sloping from Cape Diamond to the Artillery Barrack which is old and imperfect, is commanded from the high land opposite, and is besides seen in reverse and open to an enfilade fire from positions on the bank of the St. Charles River ....

In framing a general outline of Co-operation for defence with the Forces in Upper Canada, commensurate with our deficiency in strength, I have considered the preservation of Quebec as the first object, and to which all others must be Subordinate: - Defective as Quebec is, it is the only Post that can be considered as tenable for a moment, the preservation of it being of the utmost consequence to the Canadas, as the door of entry for that Force the King's Government might find it expedient to send for the recovery of both, or either of these Provinces, altho' the pressure of the moment in the present extended range of Warfare, might not allow the sending of that force which would defend both, therefore considering Quebec in this view, its importance can at once be appreciated.

If the Americans are determined to attack Canada, it would be in vain the General should flatter himself with the hopes of making an effectual defence of the open country, unless powerfully assisted from Home: - All predatory or ill concerted attacks undertaken presumptuously and without sufficient means, can be resisted and repulsed: - Still this must be done with caution, that the resources, for a future exertion, the defence of Quebec, may be unexhausted.<sup>14</sup>

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14. Ibid.

Lieutenant-General Sir John Sherbrooke's 5,000 effectives were also widely dispersed. The 104th Regiment of Foot was in New Brunswick (less companies in each of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island); the 2/8th Regiment, the 93th Regiment (less about 300 all ranks in Bermuda) and the 99th Regiment were in Nova Scotia; the Nova Scotia Fencibles was in Newfoundland.<sup>15</sup> About 6,000 of the 11,000 militia in Nova Scotia had been provided with arms and accoutrements during the years since the Chesapeake Affair and given rudimentary training. Few of the 4,000 militia in New Brunswick had received any training. The militia of Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island did not "amount to any considerable number deserving to be noticed".<sup>16</sup>

"The Province of New Brunswick and the peninsula of Nova Scotia present so many vulnerable points to an invading army," Prevost's despatch continued, "that it is difficult to establish any precise Plan for the defence of either."<sup>17</sup> Consequently, it continued, "much must depend upon Contingencies in the event of Invasion: - Their

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15. W.O. 17/2359, Nova Scotia Strength Returns, June 25, 1812.

16. C.O. 42/146, Prevost to Liverpool, May 18, 1812

17. Ibid.

security very materially depends upon the Navy, and the vigilance of our Cruizers in the Bay of Fundy." Neither Fredericton nor Saint John were defensible against an American army advancing overland, while the land defences of Halifax were "so imperfect as to be undeserving of notice". The defensive works at Sydney on Cape Breton and at Charlottetown in Prince Edward Island, were "so insignificant, as to be unworthy of observation", but attackers would have to elude the Royal Navy before they could reach either or both. There were three ships of the line, 23 frigates, and 53 sloops, brigs and smaller war vessels in North American waters, even though these were scattered between the West Indies, Halifax and Newfoundland.<sup>18</sup>

This despatch did not actually leave Quebec until June 1, by which time the President of the United States had decided that further interviews with the British Minister in Washington would be pointless. The President therefore sent Congress a message requesting an immediate declaration of war. This was voted 79 to 49 in the House of Representatives on June 4, and 19 to 13 by the Senate on June 17. On

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18. Adm. 8/100, Total Strengths for Stations in West Atlantic, July, 1812 are quoted in Gerald S. Graham, Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1950, pp. 246-247.

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the following day President Madison signed the bill. Yet the United States was unprepared for war. The United States Navy had only five frigates, three sloops and seven brigs ready to put to sea. There were only 6,744 officers and enlisted men serving on the regular establishment of the United States Army, and about 5000 newly commissioned officers and recruits in recently approved units. How many volunteers and militia would actually be supplied by individual states against their quotas could only be a matter for conjecture, and they would be completely untrained. There were no detailed plans for an offensive campaign. Yet President Madison and his Secretary of War seemed satisfied with the elderly Major-General Henry Dearborn's suggestion that offensive operations could be launched simultaneously by troops of his Northern Department against Montreal, Kingston and Niagara. The equally elderly Brigadier-General William Hull was confident that an advance by his independent North Western Army from Detroit into the Western District of Upper Canada would be welcomed by the inhabitants, who were mostly recent arrivals from the United States.<sup>19</sup>

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19. A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1940, p. 305ff.

The first news of war reached Montreal merchants from fur trade associates in New York City on June 24. Word was immediately relayed to Quebec City, where Sir George Prevost began to implement his existing plans. The flank companies of the regular and fencible regiments in Lower Canada were formed into a flank battalion to man an advanced line of posts stretching from St. Johns to Laprairie. Most of their battalion companies and the available demi-brigade of field artillery were shortly congregated forward of Montreal as a supporting force. Command of the whole was entrusted to Major-General George Baron de Rottenburg. Garrison duty at Quebec and Montreal was temporarily left to volunteers from the local sedentary militia units. After some rudimentary training, the four battalions into which the Select Embodied Militia was being organized, joined the troops in front of Montreal.<sup>20</sup>

Tension eased when no invaders appeared on the borders of Lower Canada. The instructions sent by the

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20. C.O. 42/147, Prevost to Liverpool, June 29, July 6 and 15, 1812.

Secretary of War in Washington to Major-General Dearborn on June 26 did not suggest any need for haste.<sup>21</sup> Refusal of the Governors of Massachusetts and Connecticut to furnish militia quotas and slowness in recruiting resulted in there being only 1,200 men at Albany when Dearborn did get there a month later.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile the people of northern Vermont had let it be known in Lower Canada that they wished to continue with the normal trade, obtaining British manufactured goods in exchange for the agricultural products so necessary to feed the British Army.<sup>23</sup>

Sir George Prevost was further encouraged by reports from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. News of the American declaration of war had reached Halifax on June 29, along with the encouraging information that the nearby inhabitants of New England were generally opposed to it and desirous of continuing normal trade. Since New Brunswick

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21. N.A., RG. 107, Letters sent by the Secretary of War, Military Affairs (M.6), vol. 5, Eustis to Armstrong, June 26, 1812.

22. N.A., RG. 107, Letters received by the Secretary of War (M. 221), vol. 52, Dearborn to Eustis, July 28, 1812.

23. The Montreal Herald, July 11, 1812.

was even more dependent on trade with New England, its Executive Council requested the newly appointed Administrator, Major-General G.S. Smyth, to permit the import of provisions in unarmed American ships.<sup>24</sup> After consulting his own Executive Council of Nova Scotia, Sir John Sherbrooke issued a proclamation on July 3:

Whereas every species of predatory warfare carried on against Defenceless Inhabitants, living on the shores of the United States contiguous to this Province and New Brunswick, can answer no good purpose, and will greatly distress individuals: I have therefore thought proper by and with the advice of His Majesty's Subjects under my Government, to abstain from molesting the Inhabitants living on the shores of the United States, contiguous to this Province and New Brunswick: and on no account to molest the Goods, or unarmed Coasting Vessels, belonging to the Defenceless Inhabitants on the Frontiers, so long as they shall abstain on their parts, from any acts of Hostility and Molestation towards the Inhabitants of this Province and New Brunswick, who are in a similar situation. It is therefore my wish and desire, that the Subjects of the United States, living on the frontiers, may pursue in peace their usual and accustomed Trade and occupations, without Molestation, so long as they shall act in a similar way towards the frontier inhabitants of this Province and New Brunswick.

And I do hereby order and command all His Majesty's Subjects, within my jurisdiction, to

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24. C.O. 188/18, Smyth to Liverpool, July 4, 1812.

govern themselves accordingly, until further orders. 25

A week later Major-General Smyth issued a similar proclamation. "I have not yet actually enroled any part of the Militia", he reported to London, "as depriving the Country of its labour at this Season would occasion the most alarming scarcity, if not the total want of food, during the remainder of this year."<sup>26</sup> Sherbrooke had embodied 180 militiamen and had ordered guns to be mounted at the entrance of each principal harbour in Nova Scotia, but he also was aware of the importance of harvesting the local crops. The American need for manufactured goods would, he felt, result in both provisions and much needed specie coming into Nova Scotia.<sup>27</sup> Prince Edward Island was such a quiet backwater that no unusual action was ever considered necessary.<sup>28</sup>

In Upper Canada, Brock's first reaction to the news of war had been to undertake offensive operations. Then he remembered Prevost's strict injunction and wrote his

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25. C.O. 217/90, Sherbrooke to Liverpool, July 4, 1812.

26. C.O. 188/18, Smyth to Bathurst, Aug. 31, 1812.

27. C.O. 217/90, Sherbrooke to Bathurst, Aug. 7, 1812.

28. C.O. 226/27, Smith to Bathurst, March 25 and Aug. 19, 1813.

superior officer on July 3 that upon "the reflection that at Detroit and St. Josephs the weak state of the garrisons would prevent the Commanders from accomplishing any essential service in any degree connected with their future security, and that my only means of annoyance on this communication was limited to the reduction of Fort Niagara, which could easily be battered at any future period, I relinquished my original intention, and attended only to defensive measures".<sup>29</sup>

The militia in the Niagara Peninsula turned out cheerfully to the number of 800 men to supplement the 500 regulars of the 41st Foot garrisoning Forts George, Chippawa and Erie. Similarly the militia of the loyalist settlements along the upper St. Lawrence River and at Kingston had turned out to protect this vital line of communication between Lower and Upper Canada.

As far as Prevost could judge from a distance, this unwanted war was not going badly. Yet his letter to Brock on July 10 emphasized caution:

Our numbers would not justify offensive operations being undertaken, unless they were solely calculated to strengthen a

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29. C/676, Brock to Prevost, July 3, 1812.

defensive attitude — I consider it prudent and politic to avoid any measure which can in its effect, have a tendency to unite the People in the American States. — Whilst dissension prevails among them, their attempts on these Provinces will be feeble; — it is therefore our duty carefully to avoid committing any act, which may, even by construction, tend to unite the Eastern and Southern States, unless by its perpetration, we are to derive a considerable and important advantage.<sup>30</sup>

Colonel Robert Lethbridge was despatched from Montreal to take command at Kingston and to exercise a "vigilant general superintendence of the whole district", but to take orders from Major-General Brock.<sup>31</sup> En route he was to ascertain the efficiency of the militia defending the river communication, along which a convoy system would be organized for the movement of supply boats.

Lord Bathurst's directives of August 10 approved what he had read in the first wartime despatches from North America. Although the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies hoped that war with the United States would be brought to a speedy end, once news reached Washington

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30. P.A.C., Brock Papers, Prevost to Brock, July 10, 1812.

31. C/688A, Baynes to Lethbridge, July 9, 1812.

that a new British Government had conditionally repealed the controversial Orders in Council on June 23, Prevost was to do the best he could with what men and munitions could be spared. There was no possibility of sending reinforcements from Great Britain; but two battalions of infantry were already en route from elsewhere, one to Quebec and one to Halifax, while 10,000 stands of arms were being diverted to the former and 5,000 to the latter. Bathurst's letter then got to the crux of the matter:

Your own Military Experience and local information will make you the best judge of the mode in which those means can be applied with the greatest Prospect of ultimate success. It is sufficient for me to express my concurrence in the general Principles upon which you intend to conduct operations, by making the Defence of Quebec paramount to every other consideration, should the Threat of Invasion be put into Execution.<sup>32</sup>

Sherbrooke in Nova Scotia and Smyth in New Brunswick were subsequently directed to continue "cultivating an amicable and liberal Communication with the neighbouring States, & of promoting any friendly disposition which may appear to you Best calculated to rensure [sic] its Continuence".<sup>33</sup>

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32. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Prevost, Aug. 10, 1812.

33. C.O. 217/90, Bathurst to Sherbrooke, Aug. 10 and Sept. 30, 1812.

Subsequent despatches from Canada were equally encouraging. As early as July 17, and using his own discretion, Captain Charles Roberts had led his small garrison of Fort St. Joseph and the local fur traders to a bloodless victory over the American garrison of Fort Michilimackinac.<sup>34</sup> Receipt of this news at York persuaded Major-General Brock to lead 50 regulars and 250 militia to Amherstburg, which had been menaced since July 12, when Brigadier-General Hull had crossed the river from Detroit. Receipt of these two items of news now persuaded Hull to retreat across the river to Detroit. On August 16 Hull surrendered his army and Detroit without a shot being fired. Undoubtedly Hull had been influenced in his actions by Brock's hint that "the numerous body of Indians who have attached themselves to my troops will be beyond control the moment the contest commences".<sup>35</sup> Since the Americans had already abandoned Fort Dearborn, on the site of the present city of Chicago, the only continuing American post in the Old Northwest was the tiny Fort Wayne on the Maumee

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34. C/676, Roberts to Baynes, July 17, 1812; Roberts to Brock, July 17, 1812.

35. Tupper, The Life and Correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, p. 246.

River. The western Indians were now convinced that the British meant business; the inhabitants of Upper Canada were encouraged to think that a successful defence was possible.

Meanwhile, and upon receipt of word that the Orders in Council had been repealed, Sir George Prevost had sent his Adjutant General on August 2 to arrange an armistice with Major-General Dearborn. Agreement by Dearborn on August 9 that the United States was hardly likely to want to continue a needless war was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that his own preparations had not advanced sufficiently to make offensive operations feasible. Yet the best he was empowered to do on his own authority was to order his subordinates to confine themselves to defensive measures until President Madison's pleasure should be known.

Whether or not President Madison should approve, important advantages accrued to Prevost as he explained in his letter of August 24 to Lord Bathurst:

A suspension of hostilities... on a considerable portion of the extremely extensive line of Frontier which I have to defend has enabled me rapidly to strengthen the Flank attacked. The decided superiority I have obtained on the Lakes in consequence of the precautionary measures adopted during

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the last winter has permitted me to move without interruption, independently of the arrangement, both Troops & supplies of every description towards Amherstburg, while those for Genl. Hull having several hundred miles of wilderness to pass before they can reach Detroit, are exposed, to be harassed and destroyed by the Indians. Another consequence of the Mission of Col. Baynes and of the arrangement resulting from it, has been a Discovery of the inability of the Government of the United States to overrun the Canadas & of their unprepared state for carrying on the war with vigour; this has become so manifest that His Majesty's Subjects in both Provinces are beginning to feel an increased confidence in the Government protecting them, and as the means & resources which have been displayed appear to have far exceeded their expectations, so has it effectually secured their best exertions for the defence of their Country against any tumultuary force. In the mean time from a partial suspension of hostilities I am enabled to improve & augment my resources against an Invasion, whilst the Enemy distracted by Party broils & intrigues are obliged to remain supine & to witness daily the diminution of the Force they had so much difficulty in collecting 36

Major-General Brock received news of the cease fire while returning to the Niagara Frontier from Detroit. "However wise and politic the measure must be admitted to be", he wrote to Lord Bathurst, "the Indians who cannot enter into our views, will naturally feel disheartened and suspicious of our intentions. Should hostilities recommence I much fear the influence the British possess over them will

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36. C.O. 42/147, Prevost to Bathurst, Aug. 24, 1812.

be found diminished."<sup>37</sup> Prevost's action, however, would be strongly defended in the confidential study Major-General Sir James Carmichael-Smyth would submit to the Duke of Wellington in 1825:

It has been said that General Brock, after his return to the Niagara frontier, on the 24th August, might have immediately taken Fort Niagara, which would have had the happiest effects upon the war. General Brock's force was not more than 1,200 men upon the Niagara River, one-half of whom were militia. The Americans had 6,300. Offensive operations were, therefore, not likely to have been undertaken by the British. The capture of the fort at Niagara could not, moreover, at any rate, even if it had taken place, have prevented the Americans from passing the Niagara, above the Falls, between the Chippeway and Fort Erie, or below the Falls, from Lewis Town to Queen's Town. In fact, it would, in General Brock's possession, have been rather an inconvenience, compelling him to deprive himself of 300 or 400 men from his already too small disposable force for its garrison. In defensive warfare, delay is everything. The war was essentially defensive on the part of the British.<sup>38</sup>

President Madison had, however, condemned Major-General Dearborn's arrangement with Sir George Prevost and hostilities were resumed on September 4, 1812.

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37. C.O. 42/352, Brock to Bathurst, Aug. 29, 1812.

38. Sir James Carmichael (ed.), Precis of the Wars in Canada, from 1755 to the Treaty of Ghent in 1814: With Military and Political Reflections. By the late Maj.-Gen. Sir James Carmichael-Smyth, London, Tinsley Brothers, 1862, pp. 141-142.

Meanwhile the arrival of the 1st Battalion of the 1st Royal Scots at Quebec made it possible for Prevost to replace the 49th Regiment at Montreal and send it to Kingston during the month of August, "for the preservation of the communication between Upper and Lower Canada, thereby securing in an extreme case of being attacked by an overwhelming force, a retreat for the Regulars, & Loyalists embodied" towards Quebec.<sup>39</sup> Colonel John Vincent of that regiment assumed the command at Kingston and Colonel Lethbridge moved to Prescott, from where he was to superintend the flank companies of militia stationed at the several convoy staging points along the upper St. Lawrence River.

Prevost's reply to Brock's urgent request of September 6 for reinforcements for the Niagara frontier was not open to misinterpretation. "I have already afforded you reinforcements to the full extent of my ability", Prevost wrote on September 14; "you must not, therefore, expect a further supply of men from hence until I shall receive from England a considerable increase to the present regular force

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39. C/1218, Prevost to Brock, July 27, 1812.

in this province [i.e. Lower Canada]; the posture of affairs, particularly on this frontier, requires every soldier who is in the country".<sup>40</sup> At the moment there were about 4,500 regulars, fencibles and select embodied militia in front of Montreal. Should the situation continue to appear serious, Prevost suggested that Brock abandon Detroit and withdraw the greater number of Colonel Procter's troops to the Niagara frontier, "instead of taking them from Colonel Vincent, whose regular force ought not, on any account, to be diminished".

Colonel Vincent had, however, already answered a frantic request from Brock for reinforcements by sending forward from Kingston six companies of the 49th Regiment, the two flank companies of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and a detachment of the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion. By the time they arrived Brock was feeling more optimistic, so he sent the Royal Newfoundland Fencibles to Detroit, which he decided should be retained, and the 10th Royal Veterans to Michilimackinac.

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40. Brock Papers, Prevost to Brock, Sept. 14, 1812.

Although Brock was killed early in the Battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, Major-General Roger Hale Sheaffe successfully counter-attacked the American force which had finally invaded the Niagara peninsula and forced the survivors to surrender. Further American attempts at crossing the Niagara River were made on November 28 and 30, but neither officers nor men were ready to act in a determined manner and the results were ignominious failure.

Major-General Dearborn's much heralded advance against Montreal had fizzled out a week earlier, on November 23, because his militia refused to enter Lower Canada. The need for experienced officers and at least a nucleus of trained regulars might not yet be appreciated in Washington, but the British Government was well aware of their importance to Sir George Prevost's conduct of a successful defence of the Canadas. Therefore Lord Bathurst's letter of November 16, 1812 had included the following:

In estimating however the force under your Command as compared with that of the Enemy, I cannot so entirely confine myself to numerical Calculation, as to put out of the Question the vast superiority which the general composition & discipline of the British Army supported as it is by the good disposition of all classes of the inhabitants must give to any Military operation against an American Force acting beyond their frontiers.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Prevost, Nov. 16, 1812.

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The emphasis placed by Prevost on the need for naval supremacy on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain persuaded the British Government to put the Admiralty in charge of marine operations for 1813. The appointments of commodore and commander-in-chief were given to Captain Sir James Yeo, R.N., who had spent 20 of his 30 years of life at sea and was a veteran of many small ship actions. Although Yeo was responsible directly to the Admiralty in London, he was to "cooperate most cordially" with Sir George Prevost and not undertake "any operations without the full concurrence and approbation" of him or his principal subordinates.<sup>42</sup> The Royal Navy also despatched nearly 500 officers and seamen to provide nucleus crews. Militarily Prevost's strength was scheduled to be almost doubled during the year by the addition of one cavalry and seven infantry regiments, companies of Royal Artillery, Royal Artillery Drivers and Royal Sappers and Miners, and reinforcement drafts for the existing four companies of artillery and the regular battalions of infantry. A number of small corps of volunteers were recruited in Upper and Lower Canada for 18 months service or the duration of the war. The British

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42. C/729 contains a copy of Yeo's Commission, dated March 19, 1813.

Government also arranged that Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West Indian Stations, should attempt a diversion in Prevost's favour, by harrying the American sea coast with a landing force of soldiers and marines from his fleet.<sup>43</sup> The proposed scene of operations was Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware River, the ports and harbours of which were placed under blockade "in a most strict and rigorous manner" by Admiral Warren on February 6, 1813.<sup>44</sup> Four days later, in far away Portugal, the Marquess of Wellington expressed the following opinion in a letter addressed to Lord Bathurst:

I am very glad to find that you are going to reinforce Sir G. Prevost, and I only hope that troops will go in time; and that Sir George will not be induced by any hopes of trifling advantages to depart from a strong defensive system. He may depend upon it that he will not be strong enough either in men or means, to establish himself in any conquest he might make. The attempt would only weaken him, and his losses augment the spirits and hopes of the enemy, even if not attended by worse consequences; whereas by the other system, he will throw the difficulties and risk upon them, and they will most probably be foiled.<sup>45</sup>

43. Hon. J.W. Fortescue, A History of the British Army, London, Macmillan, 1920, vol. ix, pp. 321-322.

44. Adm. 1/503 contains a copy of Warren's Proclamation.

45. Lieut. Colonel Gurwood (comp.), The Dispatches of Field Marshal The Duke of Wellington, during his various campaigns in India, Denmark, Portugal, Spain, The Low Countries, and France, from 1799 to 1818, London, John Murray, 1838, vol. x, p. 108.

Considerable time would elapse, however, before any or all of this information could reach Sir George Prevost at Quebec. The letters would have to travel across the Atlantic Ocean by sailing ship to Halifax, across Nova Scotia and up the St. John Valley by sleigh, and finally be carried by a courier on snowshoes along the Madawaska-Temiscouata portage route to Rivière-du-Loup on the lower St. Lawrence River. This was the route followed during February-March by six companies of the 104th Regiment ordered from Fredericton to Quebec as an immediate reinforcement. Meanwhile good news had arrived from Detroit, against which Brigadier-General William Harrison had been advancing with 6,300 Americans of a new North Western Army. Before dawn on the morning of January 22, Colonel Procter's troops from Amherstburg had taken the American advanced guard by surprise at Frenchtown and had killed or captured more than 900; in consequence Harrison hastily retreated with his main force. As soon as Prevost got as far west as Prescott on February 21, on his long postponed trip to Upper Canada, the garrison commander sought permission to attack Ogdensburg, which had been the base for marauding American riflemen and militia for some months. As soon as Prevost departed, Lieutenant-Colonel George Macdonell implemented an existing plan of attack and easily captured

Ogdensburg. His force returned to Prescott that afternoon, but the American riflemen were too few in number to attempt re-occupation. For the balance of the war Ogdensburg was without a garrison and there was no serious American attempt to interfere with supply convoys of sleighs or boats travelling from Montreal to Kingston.<sup>46</sup> Following his own return to Montreal in mid-March Prevost ordered a considerable troop movement to Upper Canada, since he now knew that he would begin receiving reinforcements as soon as the St. Lawrence River should be free of ice.

While Kingston harbour was still full of ice on April 26, Commodore Isaac Chauncey, U.S.N., sailed across the otherwise open Lake Ontario with 1,700 of Major-General Dearborn's troops to attempt the capture of York. This was easily accomplished on the following morning, because Major-General Sir Roger Sheaffe withdrew his outnumbered regular

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46. J. Mackay Hitsman, "Alarm on Lake Ontario, Winter 1812-1813," Military Affairs, Vol. XXIII (Fall, 1959); "David Parish and the War of 1812," Military Affairs, Vol. XXVI (Winter, 1962-63).

troops towards Kingston to avoid suffering unnecessary casualties which could not be readily replaced.<sup>47</sup> At Kingston he was joined on May 15 by Lieutenant-General Sir George Prevost and Commodore Sir James Yeo, R.N., who had hurried there from Quebec as soon as the bad news had been received from York.

From the outset Sir James Yeo realized that Chauncey's naval squadron on Lake Ontario mounted more 32-pr and 18-pr. long guns than the vessels of the Provincial Marine, whose main armament was lighter carronades which could fire cannon balls of equal size but only for lesser ranges of 400-600 yards. Once Chauncey's new corvette should be completed and armed with 26 long 24-pr. guns, his squadron would be too strong for Yeo to attack. Therefore Yeo wrote to the Admiralty on May 26 that he would "put to sea" while the opposing navies were otherwise roughly even, "as the possession of Upper Canada must depend on whoever can maintain the Naval Superiority on Lake Ontario".<sup>48</sup> Sir George Prevost's letter to Lord Bathurst of the same date was equally pointed:

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47. Colonel C.P. Stacey, The Battle of Little York, Toronto, The Toronto Historical Board, 1963.

48. Adm. 1/2736, Yeo to Secretary of Admiralty, May 26, 1813.

The growing discontent & undissembled dissatisfaction of the Mass of the People of Upper Canada, in consequence of the effects of the Militia Laws upon a population thinly scattered over an extensive range of Country, whose zeal was exhausted & whose exertions had brought want and ruin to the doors of many, & had in various instances produced a considerable Emigration of Settlers to the United States from whence most of them originally came, have compelled me for the preservation of ~~that~~ Province to bring forward my best and reserved Soldiers to enable me to support the positions we hold on the Niagara and Detroit Frontier. I have been also induced to adopt this measure from the further consideration that the Militia have been considerably weakened by the frequent desertion of even the well disposed part of them to their farms, for the purpose of getting seed into the ground before the short summer of this Country has too far advanced.<sup>49</sup>

Intelligence received by Prevost at Kingston on May 26th that Commodore Chauncey's fleet was once again absent from Sackets Harbor was too good an opportunity to miss for creating a diversion. Had the landing of the British troops at Sackets Harbor from Sir James Yeo's vessels not been delayed by an off-shore wind, success might have been achieved. As it was, the defenders of Sackets Harbor received some reinforcement and a doughty new commander in Major-General Jacob Brown of the New York Militia. Prevost's decision that the attack against the forts could not succeed

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49. C.O. 42/150, Prevost to Bathurst, May 26, 1813.

and that withdrawal was indicated is supported by Brown's despatch. "Had not Prevost retreated most rapidly under the guns of his vessels", Brown wrote, "he would never have returned to Kingston."<sup>50</sup>

Meanwhile the absent Chauncey's squadron had supported a successful attack on Fort George on the morning of May 25. Brigadier-General John Vincent decided that there was no point risking heavy casualties and ordered the British garrisons along the Niagara frontier to retreat on Burlington.<sup>51</sup> Commodore Yeo subsequently took his squadron to the head of Lake Ontario with reinforcements and supplies for Vincent's 1,600 regulars. On the night of June 5/6, Lieutenant-Colonel John Harvey led about half of these in a surprise attack on the American advanced guard which was camped at Stoney Creek. The fighting was inconclusive, but two American brigadier-generals were captured and the advanced guard retreated.<sup>52</sup> The Americans soon voluntarily vacated the whole of the Niagara peninsula, except for Fort George.

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50. N.A., RG. 107, Letters received by the Secretary of War (M.221), Vol. 51, Brown to Armstrong, June 1, 1813.

51. C/678, Vincent to Prevost, May 28, 1813.

52. C/679, Vincent to Prevost, June 6, 1813.

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Sir George Prevost took advantage of the ensuing lull to switch his senior subordinates. His letter of June 23 to the Duke of York complained as follows:

The support I have received from the General Officers in Command since the death of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, I am sorry to say has not always corresponded with my expectations. Circumstances indicating an insufficiency on the part of Major-General Sir R. H. Sheaffe to the arduous task of defending Upper Canada, have induced me to place Major-General De Rottenburg in the Military Comd and Civil administration of that province... except Sir John Sherbrooke [in Nova Scotia] the Major-General is the only General Officer of high character and established reputation serving in the Army in the North American Provinces, to whom I could entrust this important duty, without embarrassing myself with it to the prejudice of the other possessions of His Majesty committed to my care.<sup>53</sup>

Prevost still had high hopes for naval operations on Lake Ontario, despite the advantage accruing to the Americans after Chauncey's new 26-gun brig was ready for action on July 20. As Prevost subsequently wrote to Lord Bathurst:

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53. C/1220, Prevost to York, June 23, 1813.

It is scarcely possible that a decisive naval action can be avoided, and I therefore humbly hope that His Royal Highness, the Prince Regent, will approve of it being courted by us, as a necessary measure for the preservation of the advanced positions of this army, which I have determined to maintain until the naval ascendancy on Lake Ontario is decided, convinced that a retrograde movement would eventually endanger the safety of a large proportion of the troops in Upper Canada and convert that province into the seat of war.<sup>54</sup>

Yet avoided it was: by Yeo who was unwilling to have his vessels blown out of the water at long range by Chauncey's long guns; and by Chauncey who was unwilling to face the British carronades at close quarters. As Chauncey explained in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy:

...he [Yeo] has no intention of engaging us, except he can get decidedly the advantage of wind and weather; and as his vessels in squadron sail better than our squadron, he can always avoid an action....He thinks to cut off our small dull sailing schooners in detail.<sup>55</sup>

Despite Chauncey's loss of four schooners during the manoeuvring on Lake Ontario, nothing was settled. Yeo's inability to destroy Chauncey's squadron, made it impossible for his

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54. C.O. 42/151, Prevost to Bathurst, Aug. 1, 1813.

55. N.A., RG. 80, Letters received by the Secretary of the Navy from Captains (M. 125), vol. 30, Chauncey to Secretary of the Navy, Aug. 18, 1813.

own war vessels to co-operate with Prevost's land forces in the reduction of Fort George. Prevost was unwilling to risk the casualties which a direct assault would otherwise incur.<sup>56</sup> Therefore he returned to Kingston late in August, leaving the inhabitants of the Niagara peninsula and the rank and file of the army to think what they liked.

Naval command of Lake Erie went to the United States Navy as a result of the destruction at Put-in Bay on September 10 of the ill-equipped and ill-manned squadron with which Lieutenant R.H. Barclay, R.N., had been hounded into battle by a newly promoted Major-General Procter. In consequence, supplies could no longer reach Procter's army by water from Long Point and he was forced to abandon the whole Detroit frontier. The lethargic manner in which this retreat towards Niagara was conducted enabled the American army of Major-General William Harrison to overtake and route the dispirited redcoats and Indians near the Moravian Town on October 5, 1813.

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56. C.O. 42/151, Prevost to Bathurst, Aug. 25, 1813.

First reports reaching Kingston persuaded Major-General de Rottenburg, still administering the government of Upper Canada, that everything to the westward would have to be abandoned. News that Harrison's militia had insisted on returning home and that his regulars were back at Amherstburg, however, soon persuaded De Rottenburg that York and Burlington should be held "so long as may be practicable with reference to supplies of provisions &c."<sup>57</sup> Fortunately De Rottenburg's situation was strengthened by the failure of the American two-pronged offensive then being directed against Montreal. As early as August 8, the Secretary of War in Washington had spelled out a plan whereby Kingston should either be captured by direct action from Sackets Harbor or be cut off from communication with Montreal by an army moving down the St. Lawrence River and securing both its banks in the vicinity of Morrisburg. The rest of this American army could then continue against Montreal, joined by a lesser army advancing from the Lake Champlain region.<sup>58</sup> On October 26, however, the advanced guard of Major-General Wade Hampton's lesser army was repulsed at Châteauguay,

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57. C/681, De Rottenburg to Vincent, Nov. 1, 1813.

58. Henry Adams, A History of the United States of America, 1801-1817, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901, Vol. VII, p. 175ff.

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which proved to be a convenient excuse for him to retreat. Major-General James Wilkinson did descend the St. Lawrence River in early November, but he insisted on going into winter quarters after his rear guard suffered a comparable reverse at Crysler's Farm on November 11.

Since American strength along the Niagara frontier had been dangerously reduced to support Wilkinson's expedition, the Americans gave up Fort George on December 10. Unfortunately the American commander first took it upon himself to order the burning of Newark and most of Queenston after turning out the inhabitants into a cold and snowy night. On December 16 a new Administrator for Upper Canada, Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond, reached the Niagara peninsula. Three days later he sent parties of British regulars across the river to capture Fort Niagara and to burn the village of Lewiston. On December 29 British regulars and Canadian militia burned Buffalo and Black Rock. Sir George Prevost's proclamation of January 12, 1814 deprecated the need for such action but assured the inhabitants of Upper Canada that they would be "powerfully assisted at all points by the troops under His Excellency's command, and that prompt and signal vengeance will be taken

for every fresh departure by the Enemy, from that system of warfare which ought alone to subsist between enlightened and civilized nations".<sup>59</sup>

Prevost would soon learn that his efforts were still being appreciated in London. Yet Lord Bathurst's despatch of December 15, 1813 did take him to task for complaining about having received no definite instructions. Distant campaigns could not be directed from London on the basis of intelligence that would be several months old by the time orders could get to Canada, so it had been considered expedient:

...to place at your disposal such means of defence as the Exigency of the Service required, & to leave their direction or distribution to your own discretion, more especially as the correct View which you expressed on the two points most essential to the Defence of the Canadas, the maintenance of a Naval Superiority on the Lakes, & the uninterrupted Communication with our Indian allies had at an early period received the Sanction of H.M. Government, & had been repeatedly called to your attention during the course of the preceding campaign.<sup>60</sup>

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59. The Quebec Gazette, Jan. 13, 1814.

60. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Prevost, Dec. 13, 1813.

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In view of what had happened as a consequence of the Battle of Lake Erie, Lord Bathurst now approved:

...the discretion of Sir James Yeo in not courting an action [on Lake Ontario] unless under circumstances which would afford a fair prospect of a successful issue. The preservation of the fleet under his Command is (next to the destruction of that of the Enemy) the object most essential for the Security of Canada. So long as it remains entire the Enemy are precluded from attempting with any hopes of Success the attack for which their means are preparing & their Troops collected - of the Numbers of the Enemy's force, tho' considerably increased, I confess that I feel but little apprehension, when I consider the Number & Composition of the force by which they will be opposed.<sup>61</sup>

By this time Napoleon had been so badly beaten by the Allies in Germany that the end of the long European war was in sight. This persuaded President Madison to accept a British suggestion that commissioners be appointed to negotiate a peace settlement. None of this, however, was yet known to Sir George Prevost, who could not be reinforced from abroad until the St. Lawrence re-opened for navigation. His 15,000 regulars and fencibles included many convalescents and all were weary from the previous campaign; only the 1,600 Royal Marines forwarded from Halifax during the previous

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61. Ibid.

autumn were in first class condition. Therefore he considered it necessary to reject Lieutenant-General Drummond's proposal for an otherwise feasible attack on Sackets Harbor. According to his reply of April 30:

...the force in this Country is insufficient to enable me to concentrate at any one point in Upper Canada, the number of regulars you require for this important Service, without stripping Lower Canada of nearly the whole of those that are at present in it, and committing its defence to provincials and Militia. The views of His Majesty's Government respecting the mode of conducting the war with America, do not justify me exposing too much on one shake. It is by wary measures and occasional daring enterprizes with apparently disproportionate means, that the character of the war has been sustained, and from that policy I am not disposed to depart.<sup>62</sup>

Drummond's letter of June 21, 1814, requesting reinforcements to meet an American threat building up along the Niagara frontier met with a similar curt rejoinder. Drummond was to be proved correct in believing that American activity in the Plattsburgh area was not intended to lead to offensive action, but Prevost scribbled on the bottom of this letter:

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62. C.O. 42/355, Prevost to Drummond, April 30, 1814.

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Very much obliged to Genl. D. for his opinion; unfortunately for him it is not founded on fact as not one soldier intended for U. C. has been prevented moving forward by the Enemy's Demonstrations in the vicinity of Odle Town.<sup>63</sup>

By this time Prevost knew that Napoleon's abdication on April 11, 1814 would make it possible for large numbers of artillery and infantry to be transferred from the Duke of Wellington's army to North America. He did not know, of course, what was being planned in London. As early as January 28, Lord Bathurst had sought the Duke of Wellington's opinion. The duke had truthfully replied from the south of France on February 22 that he knew little about American affairs or topography. Yet his views were most cogent:

I believe that the defence of Canada, and the co-operation of the Indians, depends upon the navigation of the Lakes; and I see that both Sir G. Prevost and Commodore Barclay complain of the want of the crews of two sloops of war. Any offensive operations founded upon Canada must be preceded by the establishment of a naval superiority on the lakes.

But even if we had that superiority, I should doubt our being able to do more than secure the points on those lakes at which the Americans could have access. In such countries as America, very extensive, thinly peopled, and

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63. C/683, Drummond to Prevost, June 21, 1814.

producing but little food in proportion to their extent, military operations by large bodies are impracticable, unless the party carrying them on has the uninterrupted use of a navigable river, or very extensive means of land transport, which such a country can rarely supply.

I conceive, therefore, that were your army larger than the proposed augmentation would make it, you could not quit the lakes; and, indeed, you would be tied to them the more necessarily in proportion as your army would be large.

Then, as to landings upon the coast, they are liable to the same objections, though to a greater degree, than an offensive operation founded upon Canada. You may go to a certain extent, as far as a navigable river or your means of transport will enable you to subsist provided your force is sufficiently large compared with that which the enemy will oppose to you. But I do not know where you could carry on such an operation which would be so injurious to the Americans as to force them to sue for peace, which is what one would wish to see.<sup>64</sup>

It was June 3 before Lord Bathurst was able to send detailed secret instructions to Sir George Prevost, and the second week in July before he received them. They indicated that about 15,000 British regulars would be sent to Canada. The British Government had two objects in mind. The first

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64. Gurwood, The Dispatches of Field Marshall The Duke of Wellington, op. cit., Vol. XI, pp. 525-526.

was to guarantee the safety of Canada. The second was to secure the basis for a boundary rectification and enable the British peace commissioners being sent to Ghent to argue uti possidetis (or retention of conquered territory). Lord Bathurst's instructions, however, were intended to tell Sir George Prevost only what he needed to know.

...His Majesty's Government conceive that the Canadas will not only be protected for the time being against any attack which the enemy may have the means of making, but it will enable you to commence offensive operations on the Enemy's Frontier before the close of this Campaign. At the same time it is by no means the intention of His Majesty's Government to encourage such forward movements into the Interior of the American Territory as might commit the safety of the Force placed under your command. The object of your operations will be; first, to give immediate protection; secondly to obtain if possible ultimate security to His Majesty's Possessions in America.

The entire destruction of Sackets harbour and the Naval Establishments on Lake Erie and Lake Champlain come under the first description.

The Maintenance of Fort Niagara and so much of the adjacent Territory as may be deemed necessary; and the occupation of Detroit and the Michigan Country come under the second.

If our success shall enable us to terminate the war by the retention of the Fort of Niagara, and the restoration of Detroit and the whole of the Michigan Country to the Indians, the British Frontier will be

materially improved. Should there be any advanced position on that part of our frontier which extends towards Lake Champlain, the occupation of which would materially tend to the security of the Province, you will if you deem it expedient expel the Enemy from it, and occupy it by detachments of the Troops under your command, always however taking care not to expose His Majesty's Forces to being cut off by too extended a line of advance.

If you should not consider it necessary to call to your assistance the two Regiments which are to proceed in the first instance to Halifax, Sir J. Sherbrooke will receive instructions to occupy so much of the District to Maine as will ensure an uninterrupted intercourse between Halifax and Quebec.<sup>65</sup>

Four other regiments from Europe would be employed in direct operations against the Atlantic Coast of the United States. A "considerable force" would also be concentrated at Cork for employment in "a more serious attack on some part of the Coasts of the United States" later in the year.<sup>66</sup> "These operations", this letter advised Prevost, "will not fail to effect a powerful diversion in your favour".

On July 12 Prevost replied that the Americans would possess naval superiority on Lake Ontario until

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65. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Prevost, June 3, 1814.

66. Ibid.

September, when Sir James Yeo's new ship of the line would be completed at Kingston. Prevost was now sending three regiments to aid Lieutenant-General Drummond in Upper Canada. Had reinforcements arrived a month or six weeks earlier, while Yeo's squadron still had the naval advantage on Lake Ontario, it would have been possible to prevent the American advance into the Niagara Peninsula (and thus avoid the hard-fought engagement which would be fought at Lundy's Lane on July 25 and the casualties to be incurred subsequently while unsuccessfully trying to recapture Fort Erie). As soon as the whole reinforcement arrived from Europe, Prevost would implement his secret instructions. Until complete naval command was assured on Lake Ontario and Lake Champlain, however, he would have to remain on the defensive.<sup>67</sup>

Complete success attended the British diversions attempted against the Atlantic Coast of the United States, which had been completely placed under strict and rigorous blockade by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Cochrane's proclamation of April 25, 1814. On the evening of August 24 a combined

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67. C.O. 42/157, Bathurst to Prevost, July 12, 1814.

British military-naval force captured Washington and set fire to the Capitol and other public buildings. During the first two weeks in September a similar but smaller expedition occupied Maine as far as the Penobscot River. This made possible the resumption of the New England coastal trade with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and ensured overland communication with Quebec by the shortest and most direct route.

All of the reinforcements from the Duke of Wellington's army having arrived in Canada by mid-August to increase Prevost's effective strength to 29,437 other ranks, he prepared a division of 10,351 troops for an advance against Plattsburgh. This began on August 31, instead of being delayed a few days until the new flagship of the accompanying naval squadron should be ready for action. On September 11, Prevost goaded the much younger and junior Captain George Downie, R.N., into action for a supposed combined operation against Plattsburgh. The military attack was delayed because the troops took the wrong road; it was called off as soon as Downie's squadron was battered into submission. "Under the circumstances," Prevost reported to Lord Bathurst, "I had to determine whether I should consider

my own Fame by gratifying the Ardor of the Troops in persevering in the attack, or consult the more substantial interests of my Country by withdrawing the Army which was yet uncrippled for the security of these Provinces."<sup>68</sup>

Thus a very disgruntled army of officers and men began their retreat into Lower Canada that night.

Prevost next visited Kingston. At long last Commodore Yeo had regained naval superiority on Lake Ontario with the completion of his 112-gun ship of the line, H.M.S. St. Lawrence, but so much of the stores tediously brought up the St. Lawrence had been expended on her, that there was not enough to equip an expedition to attack Sackets Harbor. Furthermore, Prevost's letter of October 11 suggested, the navigation season was drawing to a close. In consequence H.M.S. St. Lawrence merely escorted a convoy of schooners to Fort George with much needed supplies for Lieutenant-General Drummond's army.<sup>69</sup>

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68. C.O. 42/157, Prevost to Bathurst, Sept. 22, 1814.

69. C.O. 42/157, Prevost to Bathurst, Oct. 11 and 18, 1814.

By this time the British Government was beginning to worry about the wisdom of prolonging the war in North America when the revival of hostilities in Europe was becoming a distinct possibility. Therefore the Prime Minister sought the Duke of Wellington's opinion. Wellington's reply of November 9 was very much to the point:

I have already told you and Lord Bathurst that I feel no objection to going to America, though I don't promise to myself much success there. I believe there are troops enough there for the defence of Canada forever, and even for the accomplishment of any reasonable offensive plan that could be formed from the Canadian frontier. I am quite sure that all the American armies of which I have ever read would not beat out of a field of battle the troops that went from Bordeaux last summer, if common precautions and care were taken of them. That which appears to be wanting in America is not a General, or General Officers and troops, but a naval superiority on the Lakes. Till that superiority is acquired, it is impossible, according to my notion, to maintain an army in such a situation as to keep the enemy out of the whole frontier much less to make any conquest from the enemy, which, with those superior means might, with reasonable hopes of success, be undertaken. I may be wrong in this opinion, but I think the whole history of the war proves its truth.... The question is, whether we can acquire this naval superiority on the Lakes. If we can't, I shall do you but little good in America; and I shall go there only to prove the truth of Prevost's defence, and to sign a peace which might as well be signed now....

Considering every thing, it is my opinion that the war has been a most successful one, and highly honourable to the British arms; but from particular circumstances, such as the want of the naval superiority on the Lakes, you have not been able to carry it into the enemy's territory, notwithstanding your military success, and now undoubted military superiority, and have not even cleared your own territory of the enemy on the point of attack [Fort Erie and Fort Malden]. You cannot, then, on any principle of equality in negotiation, claim a cession of territory [northern Maine, Fort Niagara and Fort Michilimackinac] excepting in exchange for other advantages which you have in your power.<sup>70</sup>

The American Government was now equally convinced of the desirability of concluding peace without further haggling by its Peace Commissioners at Ghent: trade was at a stand-still; banks were failing and paper money was being heavily discounted; only a fraction of the latest war loan was subscribed; the regular army was declining in strength because there were not enough recruits to make good its wastage; there was a growing movement in New England for secession from the United States and creation of a separate confederation.<sup>71</sup> Therefore on Christmas Eve, 1814, both sides signed a Treaty at Ghent based on the status quo ante bellum.

<sup>70</sup>. Supplementary Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G. Edited by his son, the Duke of Wellington, London, John Murray, 1862, Vol. IX, pp. 425-426.

<sup>71</sup>. Discussed at length in Adams, A History of the United States of America, op. cit., Vol. VIII.

## CHAPTER V

## DEFENDED FRONTIER

The Treaty of Ghent made no mention of the causes which had brought about the War of 1812, so it was only natural for people on both sides of the Canadian-American border to assume that there would probably be another war at some time in the not too distant future. Planning was therefore immediately put in hand by senior officers on both sides.

Economics as well as war weariness, however, almost immediately began to call the tune in both London and Washington. The politicians of an economy-conscious and debt-ridden Great Britain, which had battled France for more than 20 years, soon reduced the British Army to a dangerously low level; by 1819 there were less than 107,000 all ranks in the cavalry and infantry regiments at home and overseas.<sup>1</sup> The Royal Navy was cut from the 235 ships of the line and frigates of 1814 to 164 by 1821.<sup>2</sup> The United States Army, although it had been given a peace establishment of 10,000 officers and enlisted men, was to

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1. Hon. J. W. Fortescue, A History of the British Army, London, Macmillan, 1923, Vol. XI, p. 56.

2. G. S. Graham, Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1950, pp. 262-266.

continue to be much smaller in actual strength and was to be widely scattered in small garrisons: by 1823 only 750 of the total 6,183 officers and enlisted men were stationed at posts along the Canadian-American border.<sup>3</sup> Congress agreed to retain a properly balanced, if small, ocean going navy,<sup>4</sup> but as early as February 27, 1815 it passed an Act authorizing President Madison to have the fresh-water navy laid up or sold, except for such vessels as he should deem necessary to enforce the revenue laws.<sup>5</sup>

Attempts to enforce revenue laws along both sides of the Great Lakes soon caused local friction. This was heightened by the desertion of British soldiers, sometimes in considerable parties, to enlist in the United States

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3. Emory Upton, Military Policy of the United States, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1904, pp. 143-147. Also American State Papers Military Affairs, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1832, Vol. II, p. 558.

4. Harold & Margaret Sprout, The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776-1918, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1939, p. 88.

5. U.S. Statutes at Large, 13th Congress, 3rd Session, Chap. LXXI.

Army at a nearby fort. Michilimackinac was belatedly returned to an American garrison, despite the effect of such a move on the western Indians, as being the prerequisite for the United States to vacate the more important Fort Malden at Amherstburg.<sup>6</sup> Roughly a year later, on July 15, 1816, Sir John Coape Sherbrooke, now Governor-in-Chief of British North America, decided that these Indians must be told "distinctly and explicitly" that the British Government would neither assist nor countenance them in any hostilities against the United States.<sup>7</sup> Subsequent Indian visits to Fort Malden and Drummond's Island, to which the British garrison of Fort Michilimackinac had gone in 1815, no longer would have any political significance.

Lieutenant-General Gordon Drummond's proposals for new fortifications to defend Upper Canada had been squelched by Lord Bathurst's letter of October 10, 1815. The Secretary of State for War and the Colonies directed him to "abstain from undertaking them until His Majesty's Government shall have decided upon some general plan for

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6. A. L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1940, pp. 373-378.

7. C.O. 42/167, Addison to McDouall, July 15, 1816.

the future defence of the Province; their attention has already been directed to this object and it is therefore desirable that no new Fortification shall be erected which might either interfere or impede the general measures of defence which upon a further survey may be considered most eligible!<sup>8</sup> The suggestion to provide an alternative water route between Montreal and Kingston, by building canals on the Ottawa River and the Rideau waterway, would be considered separately; since it was now known that the Americans had proposed to cut the line of the St. Lawrence River had there been a military campaign in 1815.<sup>9</sup> Bathurst's letter of October 10 merely directed Drummond to get "estimates of expense of the Lachine Canal, and of the Ottawa and Rideau being made navigable, in order that His Majesty's Government may decided as to the propriety of undertaking these works, either separately or simultaneously".<sup>10</sup>

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8. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Drummond, Oct. 10, 1815.

9. C.P. Stacey, "An American Plan for a Canadian Campaign," American Historical Review, Vol. XLVI (January, 1941).

10. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Drummond, Oct. 10, 1815.

On February 28, 1816 the Duke of York issued orders for the disbandment of the several fencible corps in North America.<sup>11</sup> On February 5, 1817 Lord Bathurst wrote Sir John Sherbrooke that the regular army establishment was being reduced for both Canada and Nova Scotia because no immediate trouble was anticipated with the United States.<sup>12</sup> Strength returns for December 25, 1819 showed 105 officers and 2,166 other ranks of the British Army actually serving in Nova Scotia and its dependencies. The 15th, 2/60th and 62nd Regiments were at Halifax, less small detachments at Annapolis, Windsor and Fort Cumberland; the 74th Regiment was divided between Fredericton, Saint John, St. Andrews, Charlottetown and Sydney. Royal Artillerymen were, of course, stationed at each fort.<sup>13</sup> Some 3,540 other ranks were actually serving in the Canadas, but 80 of their 173 officers seem to have been absent for the

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11. C.O. 42/168, York to Sherbrooke, Feb. 28, 1816.

12. C.O. 43/24, Bathurst to Sherbrooke, Feb. 5, 1817.

13. W.O. 17/2366, Distribution of the Troops serving in Nova Scotia & Its Dependencies, Dec. 25, 1819.

winter. Apart from gunners, there were the 1/60th and 76th Regiments at Quebec, the 37th Regiment at Montreal, the 70th Regiment at Kingston and the 68th Regiment at Fort George; small detachments from these were at St. Johns, Isle-aux-Noix, Coteau-du-Lac, Prescott, Fort Erie, Fort Malden, Penetanguishene and Drummond's Island.<sup>14</sup>

By this time the fresh-water navies of both sides had become, in modern parlance, "mothball fleets". The Americans had taken the initiative in 1815, at the direction of Congress and for reasons of economy and common sense: unfinished ships of the line at Sackets Harbor were housed over as protection from the weather, while the frigates and larger war vessels there and on Lakes Champlain and Erie were either laid up or dismantled. The same reasons, and shortage of personnel, had caused the Royal Navy to lay up its larger ships on Lake Ontario and to continue the rest in commission with only a few guns. It was maintaining six small armed schooners for transportation and other duties on the Upper Lakes; the continuing gunboats on Lake Champlain were tied up at Isle-aux-Noix. Yet the

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14. W.O. 17/1523, General Monthly Strength Return, Canada, Dec. 25, 1819.

British Government repulsed initial American suggestions that there be a mutual limitation of naval armament, for a very sound reason. Upper Canada's only hope of survival in another war depended, as it had in 1812, on an initial naval superiority on the Lakes; since American greater local resources and population would enable a naval force to be built from scratch far more quickly than the Royal Navy could transport men and materials up the St. Lawrence River. Yet curtailment of military and naval expenditure was the wish of Parliament and there was always the possibility that in the long run the Americans would win a naval building race anyway, no matter how hard the Royal Navy tried, so the British Minister in Washington, Charles Bagot, was authorized early in 1817 to negotiate and to accept the American proposals.<sup>15</sup> The note sent by Bagot to Rush on April 28 agreed to the American suggestion that the naval force to be maintained on the "American Lakes" should henceforth be limited to the following vessels on each side:

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15. C.P. Stacey, "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier 1815-1871", American Historical Review, Vol. LVI (October, 1950), pp. 10-11.

## DEFENDED FRONTIER

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On Lake Ontario to one vessel not exceeding one hundred tons burthen and armed with one eighteen-pound cannon.

On the Upper Lakes to two vessels not exceeding like burthen each and armed with like force.

On the waters of Lake Champlain to one vessel not exceeding like burthen and armed with like force.

And His Royal Highness [the Prince Regent] agrees, that all other armed vessels, on these lakes shall be forthwith dismantled, and that no other vessels of war shall be there built or armed.<sup>16</sup>

Bagot's note and Secretary of State Richard Rush's similar note constitute what is best known as the Rush-Bagot Agreement. It went into effect immediately, but could be abrogated by either side after giving six months' notice. Neither side bothered to maintain all of the permitted schooners, but the dockyards of both were continued and large quantities of naval stores were held for possible use by the mothball fleets. Furthermore, the Admiralty expended considerable sums on repair of the warships laid up at Kingston.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Treaties and Agreements affecting Canada in force between His Majesty and the United States of America, with subsidiary documents, 1814-1925, compiled in the Department of External Affairs, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1927, p. 12.

17. C.P. Stacey, "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier 1815-1871," op. cit., pp. 12-13.

Article II of the Convention signed at London on October 20, 1818 continued the international boundary from the north-west corner of the Lake of the Woods to the 49th parallel of latitude and along this to the Rocky Mountains. Article III provided that the territory westward to the Pacific Ocean should be free and open to both British and Americans for the next 10 years. Elsewhere the British and American Commissioners appointed under the Treaty of Ghent succeeded in delineating the boundary from the 45th parallel through the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes, and divided up the disputed islands in Passamaquoddy Bay. They were, however, unable to settle the long disputed boundary between northern Maine and both New Brunswick and Lower Canada.<sup>18</sup>

Meanwhile the British Government had approved one relatively inexpensive measure which it was hoped would further Canada's successful defence. This was planned settlement of discharged soldiers, both those discharged after service in North America and those who might wish to emigrate from the British Isles with their families. The first soldier-settlers seem to have been a few men from the 10th Royal Veteran Battalion. These were scattered

18. A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, pp. 421-426.

during the late spring of 1814, with their wives and children, along the overland route between Rivière-du-Loup and the settlements in northern New Brunswick.<sup>19</sup> However, Lord Bathurst's instructions that soldier-settlements might be established along the borders of both Canadas with the United States were questioned by officers on the spot.<sup>20</sup> In a letter of March 18, 1815, Sir George Prevost successfully argued against filling up the border townships east of Lake Champlain:

The experience of the War with the United States, lately terminated has in more than one instance shewn that an unsettled country immediately on the frontier affords a better defence than any population that could be placed there; and I am impressed with the firm persuasion that should the contrary plan be adopted, whatever may be the precautionary measures used, the object of His Majesty's Government for the protection and advancement of the colony, both in an agricultural and political point of view would be frustrated.<sup>21</sup>

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19. C/621, MacPherson to Baynes, May 1, 1814; Bouchette to Prevost, June 30, 1814.

20. C.O. 43/23, Bathurst to Prevost, July 12 and Sept. 8, 1814.

21. C.O. 42/161, Prevost to Bathurst, March 18, 1815.

It was, however, left to Lieutenant-General Sir Gordon Drummond to object successfully, more than a year later, to the settlement of the still vacant border townships to the west of Lake Champlain. On July 1, 1816 Lord Bathurst agreed that no further land grants should be made; existing settlers should not, however, be dispossessed.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere blocks of land were set aside for members of the same unit, but only two of the locations were important militarily: these were the banks of the St. Francis River settled by the Canadian Voltigeurs and the route of the proposed Rideau Canal where grants were made to officers and men of the 97th, 99th and 100th Regiments of Foot and De Watteville's Regiment of foreign troops. Despite the official help and supervision given, and as Sir George Prevost had predicted would be the case,<sup>23</sup> many of the old soldiers did not become good farmers. The situation was well summed up in Robert Gourlay's Statistical Account of Upper Canada:

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1816.           22. C.O. 43/24, Bathurst to Sherbrooke, July 1,

1815.           23. C.O. 42/161, Prevost to Bathurst, March 18,

This has been the uniform issue of military settlements from first to last in Canada, and in some degree also in the United States of America. Soldiers, in general, choose their trade only to engage in idleness, and give reins to a roving disposition; and, after having spent 20 or 30 years in the profession of gentlemen, cannot easily train into the habits of sober and persevering industry. At the first settlement of Upper Canada, it was not uncommon for soldiers to sell their 200 acre lots for a bottle of rum. Now-a-days, only 100 is granted, and settlers are prohibited from selling till after three years' residence, and the performance of certain easy duties. Still, I have been told since coming home, by a half-pay officer of the Perth settlement, that scarcely one soldier out of fifty now remains there for good.

The deserted lots have been for the most part filled up with emigrants from Britain and Ireland.<sup>24</sup>

By this time also, the policy of keeping the area between Montreal and Lake Champlain in a state of nature had proved to be a failure. Another Governor-in-Chief, Lord Dalhousie, reported on April 24, 1821 that this wilderness had become a haven for fugitives from both Canadian and American justice, squatters were farming some of its excellent soil and Americans were illegally cutting its timber.<sup>25</sup> Approval for his request to open the districts

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24. Robert Gourlay, Statistical Account of Upper Canada: Compiled with a View for a Grand System of Emigration London, Simpkin & Marshall, 1822, vol. I, p. 550.

25. C.O. 42/187, Dalhousie to Bathurst, April 24, 1821.

to proper settlement meant that more concrete steps would have to be taken to defend the Canadian border.

These had been already proposed by the Duke of Richmond, in a long letter of November 10, 1818 addressed to Lord Bathurst. A general in the British Army and a veteran of the Waterloo Campaign, the Duke of Richmond had made a personal trip along the Canadian border following his appointment as Governor-in-Chief in 1818. His proposals, for the most part, were based on long accepted propositions and only their wording differed from that of Simcoe, Craig and Prevost. According to the Duke of Richmond:

... the primary objects appear to be the preservation of Quebec, Kingston & Montreal; the first two as being the Keys of their respective Provinces & the last, as the Depot of the Arms & Ammunition of the Militia of that part of the Country: of those Stores which must be sent to Upper Canada, & as absolutely necessary to preserve the communication between the two Provinces.<sup>26</sup>

The best means of slowing up an American advance down the Lake Champlain route would be to improve the defences of Isle-aux-Noix and to purchase the land on both banks of the Richelieu River to ensure that it would remain swamp and thus be impassable for an army. New works at St. Johns, Chambly and Sorel would also help to delay an enemy advance;

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26. C/1247, Richmond to Bathurst, Nov. 10, 1818.

a fortified depot on St. Helen's Island, as already recommended, by Commodore Sir Edward Owen, R.N., would make it impossible for Americans to launch an attack against Montreal from the south shore of the St. Lawrence River.

The Duke of Richmond renewed the recommendation for creating a line of communication between Lower and Upper Canada "independent of the St. Lawrence, the possession of which River above Cornwall for the conveyance of Reinforcements or Stores ought not to be ours for three Days after the commencement of hostilities". Sackets Harbor should be attacked as soon as war broke out. In summary form his proposals were:

To strengthen Quebec, Isle-aux-Noix & Kingston;

To remove the Stores from Montreal to St. Helens & to place the Island in a state of defence;

To open the Navigation of the Ottawa & Rideau & construct a Canal from Montreal to Lachine;

To do enough on the Niagara Frontier to convince the Inhabitants that we do not intend to abandon them; and lastly

To place the Militia in some state of efficiency.<sup>27</sup>

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27. Ibid.

This appreciation was referred to the Duke of Wellington, who was Britain's greatest soldier and was then serving as Master General of the Ordnance. Wellington replied to Lord Bathurst on March 1, 1819 that he agreed with the Duke of Richmond's diagnosis. The only secure position was Quebec. The existing wilderness between Maine and Lower Canada would make it impossible for a proper American Army to advance directly against Quebec, as Benedict Arnold's expedition had done in 1775.<sup>28</sup>

According to the Duke of Wellington, not only would it be impossible to navigate the St. Lawrence River above Cornwall in time of war; by planting a few heavy batteries along the American shore, the enemy could also prevent supply boats from navigating the Niagara, Detroit and St. Clair rivers. As regards the Great Lakes, Wellington's memorandum continued:

... our use of each of them must depend upon, our naval superiority upon it; and as everything which can enable us to acquire and maintain such naval superiority must come from England, and then by a difficult river navigation of nearly

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28. Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G. Edited by his son, The Duke of Wellington, K.G. In continuation of the former series. London, John Murray, 1867-1878, Vol. I, p. 39.

three hundred miles to Kingston and twelve hundred to Lake Huron, whereas the enemy have all they require upon the spot, it can scarcely be believed that we shall be able to acquire and maintain that naval superiority. The pains which [Commodore] Sir E. Owen has taken to survey these lakes and rivers, and to point out the places at which loaded boats and vessels might take shelter and might receive protection from works and troops, show the difficulty, nay, the impossibility, of executing such a system. Works must be constructed, armed, and manned at every point of the lakes; and, after all, the officers and men in them might and would have the mortification of seeing valuable cargoes carried off by a single gunboat, to which they should not be able to afford protection.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than gamble on elaborate arrangements which might or might not ensure free navigation of the inland waterways in wartime, Wellington favoured the construction of canals on the Ottawa and Rideau waterways to provide a safe water route to Kingston. In order to obviate possible American naval supremacy on Lakes Ontario and Erie, he suggested improving water routes across country from the Rideau River to Lake Simcoe, from Kingston via the Bay of Quinte and Rice Lake to Lake Simcoe, from Lake Simcoe to Lake Huron, and from the Grand River to the Thames River. By such means, his memorandum continued:

... we should be able to maintain an army upon the Niagara frontier notwithstanding that the enemy should be in possession of the navigation of Lake Ontario. We should

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29. Ibid.

## DEFENDED FRONTIER

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likewise be enabled to concentrate our naval means in small craft upon Lake Huron, lake Erie, and lake Ontario, upon whichever of the three we might see fit, and thus be enabled to be superior to the enemy on one of the three, notwithstanding that our operations on shore and the defence of the country could be entirely independent of such superiority.

Wellington admitted, however, that he was "perfectly aware" that it would be difficult, if not impossible to convince the inhabitants of Upper Canada that they would be defended unless there was something tangible for them to see.

Therefore it might be necessary to build a new fortress on the Niagara frontier, but on the Chippawa River rather than at either Fort George or Fort Erie.

Implementation of such a defence plan, the Duke of Wellington emphasized, would require a field force of 10,000 regulars, and regular garrisons of 1,000 at Quebec, 500 at Montreal, 500 in forts along the Richelieu River, 500 at Kingston, 500 split between Niagara and Penetanguishene, and all the available militia. The left corps of the field force, 5,000 regulars and 3,000 militia, should be based on the juncture of the Irish Creek with the Rideau River near the village of Merrickville, which is 44 miles from Ottawa. From here it could move to Montreal in four days, to Kingston in two or three days or to Lake Simcoe in from six

to eight days. The similar right corps should be based between the headwaters of the Holland and Grand rivers, which is roughly the location of the Canadian Army's present Camp Borden; from here it could move towards Niagara, York or Kingston. As far as Wellington could judge, based on the experience of the War of 1812, the Americans would have difficulty forming army corps capable of taking on either of the defending corps, or even of advancing into and maintaining themselves on Canadian soil.<sup>30</sup> Yet the Duke of Wellington was quite emphatic about decrying any idea of the British taking the offensive:

In considering this system I have laid aside, as impracticable, the notion of attacking the United States on their frontier. I have never yet seen any plan of attack upon that power which was at all likely to answer the purpose; but I am certain that an attack could not succeed made from this frontier, in which we are frozen up for five months of the year, and on which the enemy have, and must continue to have, the naval superiority.<sup>31</sup>

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30. Ibid. Also Vol. IV, p. 394, where Wellington told a Select Committee of the House of Commons on April 15, 1828: "I have never been in that country, but I must add that I have been astonished that the officers of the army and navy employed in that country were able to defend those provinces last war; and I can attribute their having been able to defend them as they did only to the inexperience of the officers of the United States in the operations of war, and possibly likewise to the difficulty which they must have found in stationing their forces as they ought to have done, upon the right bank of the St. Lawrence".

31. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 43.

The Duke of Wellington's recommendations resulted in some money being made almost immediately available. Canalization of the Ottawa River began in 1819, the work being undertaken by personnel of the Royal Staff Corps, whereas a Lachine Canal was already being built under provincial and civilian arrangements. Work also began at Isle-aux-Noix, where a new Fort Lennox was designed to replace the rotting wooden defences. Bomb proof store houses only were started on St. Helen's Island. During May, 1820 work was finally started on a proper citadel at Quebec City, under the supervision of the Commanding Royal Engineer, Lieutenant-Colonel E.W. Durnford.<sup>32</sup>

Only on April 11, 1825 did the Duke of Wellington appoint a Commission headed by Colonel Sir James Carmichael-Smyth, R.E. to visit British North America to report on what had been done to implement his recommendations of 1819 and what difficulties were preventing or impeding completion of that programme. The importance of the Rideau waterway was stressed in the instructions given to Colonel Carmichael-Smyth and his two associates, Major Sir George Charles Hoste and Captain John B. Harris, but they were told to investigate all the water routes mentioned by the Duke of Wellington in

32. C.P. Stacey, "A Note on the Citadel of Quebec," *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. XXIX (December, 1948), p. 389.

1819. They were also to report on the state of the various forts and of the overland route between New Brunswick and Lower Canada.<sup>33</sup> The Commissioners reached Quebec City on May 25. After spending the summer and early autumn on their task, they returned to England and submitted a bulky report to the Duke of Wellington. By this time Carmichael-Smyth had become a Major-General.

They reported that, despite there being 900 miles of frontier, American forces were likely to attack Canada by only three routes. The Lake Champlain-Richelieu River route was still the most probable; the Hudson River had now been joined to Lake Champlain by a canal which made it possible to move troops and stores all the way by water from New York City to within 45 miles of Montreal. The Erie Canal connected the Hudson River with Buffalo to facilitate invasion of the Niagara Peninsula. An offshoot of this canal being built to connect with the eastern end of Lake Ontario at Oswego would facilitate an attack on Kingston.<sup>34</sup>

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33. Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Arthur Duke of Wellington, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 436.

34. Copy of a Report to His Grace The Duke of Wellington, Master General of His Majesty's Ordnance &c. Relative to His Majesty's North American Provinces by a Commission of which M. General Sir James Carmichael-Smyth was President, Lieut. Colonel Sir George Hoste and Captain Harris were Members, London, Colonial Office, 1825.

Extension of settlement and an increase in the number of roads along the border of Lower Canada would make it possible for an American army advancing down the Lake Champlain route to bypass Isle-aux-Noix; but it could not avoid St. Johns at the rapids on the Richelieu river, nor could it safely proceed from its mouth down the St. Lawrence towards Quebec while a British garrison remained at Montreal. Therefore the Report recommended the construction of a major fortress on the Island of Montreal and lesser works at St. Johns, Chambly, the mouth of the Châteauguay River and on St. Helen's Island. Reconstruction of the fortifications at Kingston would afford protection for that naval base and the terminal of the proposed Rideau Canal. A new fortress was recommended for the Niagara frontier and lesser works at the mouth of the Ouse River, at Chatham on the Thames River, at Amherstburg and at Penetanguishene. British garrisons would have to be provided everywhere, because the sedentary militia in both Canadas was untrained and unarmed and no more suited for waging war than in 1812.<sup>35</sup>

The new Citadel at Quebec was about one-third finished. The "great use of the Province of New Brunswick, <sup>as</sup> is/a connecting link between Canada and Nova Scotia";

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35. Ibid.

therefore the Report recommended the construction of a military road along the line of the existing portage route. Since the correct defensive line was the St. John River, settlement should be discouraged to the east of it so that there might continue to be a wilderness barrier bordering onto the State of Maine.<sup>36</sup>

The final section of the Report was not lithographed for circulation, on the orders of the Duke of Wellington, since it dealt with "Vulnerable Points of America" and suggested British offensive operations on the outbreak of war to forestall American attacks. It proposed three possibilities: an advance down Lake Champlain to Waterford, where the Mohawk River joined the North River: damaging the Erie Canal at Lockport; landing an army on Long Island or Staten Island while the Royal Navy blockaded New York City and the rest of the Atlantic Coast.<sup>37</sup> Such proposals ran counter to Wellington's view that offensive operations against the United States were impracticable, so Sir James Carmichael-Smyth submitted a confidential "Precis of the

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36. Ibid.

37. J.J. Talman, "A Secret Military Document," American Historical Review, Vol. XXXVIII (January, 1933).

Wars in Canada, from 1755 to the Treaty of Ghent in 1814", for the Duke's own edification.<sup>38</sup>

On December 6, 1825 the Duke of Wellington forwarded a copy of the Carmichael-Smyth Report to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. Wellington's personal endorsement of this Report stressed that it was impossible for the British Government to withdraw from these dominions: "whether valuable or otherwise, which can scarcely be a question, they must be defended in war".<sup>39</sup> Action would, however, have to be initiated ahead of time. "It is quite clear", his memorandum continued, "unless some system of communicating with Upper Canada besides the use of the river St. Lawrence should be carried into execution, such communication will be impracticable beyond Montreal in time of war". Uninterrupted communication between Lower Canada and New Brunswick would also be essential and justified demanding a proper settlement of the international boundary with Maine. Fortifications were almost as important as communications and Wellington added Halifax and Quebec to those listed in the Carmichael-Smyth Report. Wellington's own conclusion was as follows:

38. Edited and published by his son in 1862 and referred to several times earlier in this thesis.

39. Despatches, Correspondence and Memoranda of Field Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, Vol. II, p. 573.

As, on the one hand, I do not entertain the smallest doubt that, if the communications and works proposed by the Committee are carried into execution, his Majesty's dominions in North America ought to be, and will be, effectually defended and secured against any attempt to be made upon them hereafter by the United States, however formidable their power, and this without any material demand upon the military resources of the country; that if these, or some measures of this description are not adopted, and if measures are not taken at an early period to manifest the determination of the King's government to hold this dominion, at all events we cannot expect the inhabitants, upon whose loyal and gallant exertions we must in the end depend for their defence, will do otherwise than look for the security of their lives and properties to a reasonable submission to the United States.

Even by the greatest exertion of the military resources of his Majesty's government in war, these dominions could not be successfully and effectually defended without the addition of the greatest part of the measures proposed; but if they are all adopted, and attention is paid to the militia laws in these countries, and care taken to keep alive a military spirit among the population, the defence of these dominions ought not to be a more severe burthen upon the military resources of the empire in war than such defence as was made proved to be during the late war.<sup>40</sup>

The enormous expense involved in these recommendations, however, frightened the British Government which had to think of the taxpayers. In consequence only the Grenville Canal

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40. Ibid.

on the Ottawa River and the approximately 20 miles of canals required on the Rideau waterway were undertaken as new works in 1827.<sup>41</sup> The Rideau waterway was completed by Lieutenant-Colonel John By, R.E. in May, 1832, but it cost more than 1,000,000 pounds sterling and became the subject of a Parliamentary inquiry.<sup>42</sup> Work at Quebec had been completed a year earlier, in 1831, at a cost of almost 236,500 pounds rather than the 70,000 pounds originally estimated; however this sum included repair of the existing walls as well as construction of the new citadel.<sup>43</sup>

During the spring of 1828 a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Public Income and Expenditure agreed to recommend new fortifications at Halifax and Kingston.<sup>44</sup> Parliamentary approval having been obtained, and plans approved by the Board of Ordnance on July 15, 1828, work

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41. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 80.

42. British Parliamentary Papers, 1830-1831, Vol. III, no. 395, and 1831-1832, Vol. V, no. 570.

43. C.P. Stacey, "A Note on the Citadel of Quebec," op. cit., p. 390.

44. British Parliamentary Papers, 1828, Vol. VIII, no. 493.

was commenced on Halifax Citadel during the following October and eventually completed.<sup>45</sup> Work did not start at Kingston until after the Rideau Canal was finished in 1832. It then continued for a good 10 years, but only a redoubt with an advanced battery was actually constructed on Point Henry; negotiations were made for the land needed to build another five redoubts similar to Fort Henry, but the necessary money was never appropriated by the British Parliament.<sup>46</sup>

Meanwhile the Admiralty had been debating the wisdom of continuing its mothball fleet on Lake Ontario and its whole establishment upon the "Lakes of Canada".<sup>47</sup> As early as 1826 the United States Navy had closed its establishments and left the remaining two unfinished ships at Sackets Harbor in charge of a sailing master, and it was apparent that the British money available for repairs at Kingston was not sufficient to keep the warships there from rotting at their moorings. Late in 1830 the matter was brought to

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45. Harry Piers, The Evolution of Halifax Fortress 1749-1928, Halifax, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1947, pp. 37-41.

46. Ronald L. Way, "Old Fort Henry, The Citadel of Upper Canada," The Canadian Geographical Journal (April, 1950).

47. C.P. Stacey, "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier, 1815-1871," p. 13.

a head by a short-lived Anglo-American crisis resulting from the still unsettled Maine-New Brunswick boundary. The First Lord of the Admiralty then requested an opinion from General Sir James Kempt, who had just returned home after administering the government of Lower Canada for better than two years. During that time Kempt had also presided over a military committee charged with reviewing Major-General Carmichael-Smyth's recommendations for the defence of Kingston. Kempt, in turn, consulted the Duke of Wellington under whom he had served in the Peninsular War. Wellington now agreed with Kempt that there was no point bothering about the warships rotting away at Kingston, but insisted that its navy yard must be continued if it was expected to navigate Lake Ontario in the event of war and ensured the safety of both York and the Niagara Peninsula.<sup>48</sup> Sir James Kempt's lengthy reply to the Admiralty, dated January 26, however, emphasized that the real defence of Canada must depend upon an efficient militia, supported by an adequate proportion of regular troops to give confidence to the inhabitants, and by the construction of proper fortifications to defend lines of communication and depots.<sup>49</sup>

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48. Despatches, Correspondence, and Memoranda of Field-Marshal Arthur Duke of Wellington, K.G. Vol. VIII, pp. 397-398.

49. C.O. 42/245, Kempt to Graham, Jan. 26, 1831.

In consequence the Admiralty decided not to spend any money on warship repairs at Kingston in 1831. During the following year an unsuccessful attempt was made to sell the rotting hulks after their guns and naval stores had been sent down the St. Lawrence River for return to Britain.<sup>50</sup> The two rotting schooners on the upper lakes were sunk at Penetanguishene.<sup>51</sup> In 1834 the navy yard at Kingston was placed on a maintenance basis. Two years later the Royal Navy's inland establishment was closed as a further economy.<sup>52</sup>

The Admiralty view now seems to have become overly optimistic. War vessels from the North American and West Indian Squadron could be brought up the St. Lawrence River and recently constructed canals for service on Lake Ontario whenever required. The dockyard at a newly fortified Kingston could then be re-opened. Naval vessels might even be sent through the Welland Canal into Lake Erie if British troops and Canadian militia could make a successful defence of the Niagara peninsula.

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50. Richard A. Preston, "The Fate of Kingston's Warships," Ontario History, Vol. XLIV (June, 1952), pp. 95-96.

51. K.R. Macpherson (comp.), "List of Vessels employed on British naval service on the Great Lakes, 1755-1875," Ontario History, Vol. LV (September, 1963), p. 178.

52. R.A. Preston, "The Fate of Kingston's Warships," op. cit., p. 96.

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DEFENCE OF CANADA

1763-1871

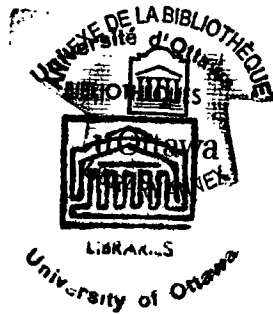
A STUDY OF BRITISH STRATEGY

by J. Mackay Hitsman

Thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Arts of the  
University of Ottawa as  
partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy

*Grade conféré  
le 9 octobre 1964  
E. H. J. J.*

Ottawa, Canada, 1964



CHAPTER VI  
BORDER PROBLEMS

Militarily the rebellions which erupted in both Canadas during the late autumn of 1837 were minor police actions and may be dismissed very quickly in favour of a discussion of the border defence problems that arose in their wake.

Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Bond Head of Upper Canada had enough military experience to know that no amount of drilling with homemade pikes could make up for a lack of muskets. Personally convinced that the majority of the inhabitants were loyal and would rally to his support, Bond Head sent his single regiment of British regulars (24th Foot) to the assistance of the Commander of the Forces, Lieutenant-General Sir John Colborne, in Lower Canada. This left a large quantity of army muskets virtually unguarded at Toronto. William Lyon Mackenzie's attempted march on Toronto did prove to be a fiasco on December 5, and two days later the loyal but untrained militia who had responded to the Lieutenant-Governor's call to arms had no trouble driving the rebels

from Montgomery's Tavern and into exile. Bond Head's despatch of December 19 was substantiation for his policy and included no words of false modesty:

On the day of Mr. McKenzie's defeat, as well as on the following morning, bands of militiamen, from all directions poured in upon me, in numbers which honourably proved that I had not placed confidence in them in vain.

From the Newcastle district alone 2000 men, with nothing but the clothes in which they stood, marched, in the depth of winter, towards the capital, although nearly 100 miles from their homes....

The numbers which were advancing towards me were so great [10,000-12,000 men] that, the day after Mr. McKenzie's defeat, I found it absolutely necessary to print and circulate a notice declaring that there existed no further occasion for the resort of militia to Toronto; and the following day I was further enabled to issue a general order, authorizing the whole of the militia of the Bathurst, Johnstown, Ottawa and Eastern districts, to go and lend their assistance to Lower Canada.<sup>1</sup>

The cause for rebellion in Lower Canada was primarily racial. According to Lord Durham's subsequent Report:

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1. C.O. 42/439, Head to Glenelg, Dec. 19, 1837.

... every institution which requires for its efficiency a confidence in the mass of the people, or co-operation between its classes, is practically in abeyance in Lower Canada. The militia, on which the main defence of the Province against external enemies, and the discharge of many of the functions of internal police have hitherto depended, is completely disorganized. A muster of that force would, in some districts, be the occasion for quarrels between the races, and in the greater part of the country the attempting to arm or employ it would be merely arming the enemies of the Government.<sup>2</sup>

Volunteer corps of cavalry, artillery and rifles had been belatedly authorized by the Governor-in-Chief, Lord Gosford, to augment Sir John Colborne's 3,300 British regulars.<sup>3</sup>

Actual insurrection, following Louis Joseph Papineau's sudden departure from Montreal on November 16 and the consequent issuance of warrants for the arrest of the principal patriotes, was limited to two regions. Mixed columns of regulars and volunteers were able to vanquish the ill-armed rebels of both the Richelieu country, after an initial repulse at St. Denis, and of the Two Mountains region at St. Eustache. On December 23 Lord Gosford felt justified in writing to the Secretary of State for War and

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2. C.P. Lucas (ed.), Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1912, Vol. II, p. 53.

3. W.O. 17/1541, General Monthly Return, Canada, Oct. 1, 1837.

the Colonies that "no further organized attempt is likely to be made to interrupt the public tranquillity".<sup>4</sup> He decided, however, to retain 4,128 volunteers of cavalry, artillery and infantry corps on full-time, paid service until May 1, 1838, if necessary. Most, but not all, of the volunteers were English-speaking citizens. A further 52 small corps of unpaid volunteers continued to drill weakly.<sup>5</sup>

In London on the same December 23, 1837, however, the Military Secretary, Lord Fitzroy Somerset, was preparing a memorandum for the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army based on the first reports of insurrection received from Canada. The principal points made by Major-General Lord Fitzroy Somerset were:

The great object in Lower Canada is the possession of the Navigation of the River St. Lawrence; and of the Cities of Quebec and Montreal.

These secured, the rest depends upon la petite Guerre. The Canadians will be tired of this before we shall, if we should secure the great points.

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4. C.O. 42/274, Gosford to Hlenelg, Dec. 23, 1837.

5. W.O. 43/72, Paid Volunteers in Lower Canada during winter of 1837-8 as compiled at War Office, n.d.

The Army in Lower Canada and the Fleet should be reinforced at the earliest possible period of time.

It would be very desirable to have an Army and a Fleet in the St. Lawrence as soon as the Navigation shall open.

It is obvious that the operations of the War will depend upon the Communications, which must be by water; by the St. Lawrence and its Tributary Streams.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile the service companies of the 43rd and 85th Regiments were travelling the overland route from New Brunswick in sleighs. They were followed to Quebec during January, 1838 by the flank companies of these units, the 34th Regiment and a detachment of Royal Artillery.<sup>7</sup> In consequence Sir John Colborne ordered the 24th Regiment to return to Upper Canada, and the 32nd Regiment to accompany it there from Lower Canada. Following their arrival the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada felt justified in dismissing most of the militia and volunteers on duty. Only about 1,950 volunteers and 4,600 militia were incorporated into units as provincial troops to serve until July 1, 1838.<sup>8</sup>

6. C.O. 537/25, Memorandum on "Defence of Canada", Dec. 23, 1837.

7. W.O. 17/2385, General Monthly Return, Nova Scotia, Jan. 1, 1838.

8. W.O. 43/72, Paid Corps in Upper Canada during winter 1837-8 as compiled at War Office, n.d.

With the arrival of William Lyon Mackenzie at Buffalo, New York on December 11, 1837, recruiting had got under way openly for a "Patriot Army" which would invade the Canadas and establish republics there. Barely two years before, American newcomers to Texas had secured its independence from Mexico by force of arms. A considerable anti-British element in the northern states was now reinforced by large numbers of labourers thrown out of employment by the current economic depression, so recruits flocked into the ranks of the patriots. The United States was obligated by its Neutrality Act of 1818 to put a stop to any fillibustering activities originating on its own soil, but Congress had passed no legislation which would permit federal officials actually to put a stop to warlike preparations by the patriots: the greater part of the small regular army was either momentarily campaigning in Florida or garrisoning forts west of the Mississippi River and no one was anxious to antagonize potential voters in a mid-term election year.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Albert B. Corey, The Crisis of 1830-1842 in Canadian-American Relations, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1941 is the definitive account of the border disturbances. A much more limited work is Hamish A. Leach, A Politico-Military Study of the Detroit River Boundary Defense during the December 1837-March 1838 Emergency, University of Ottawa, Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, 1963.

Colonel Allan MacNab's 2,000 militia and volunteers standing guard along the Canadian shore of the Niagara River had been ordered not to attack the patriots occupying Navy Island above the Falls. In an effort to alleviate boredom, however, MacNab sent seven boat loads of men to seize the American-owned steamer Caroline which was running supplies to the patriots. This was accomplished on the night of December 29/30 and Caroline was set on fire in mid-stream where it sank, but the deed had been done when she was docked on the American shore and an American citizen killed. At Detroit the patriots who had been drilling openly failed miserably in their ill-organized attempt to capture Amherstburg on January 7, 1838. A week later Major-General Winfield Scott, specially sent from Washington to maintain the peace, managed to persuade the socially prominent but militarily inept young Rensselaer van Rensselaer to withdraw his force of patriots from Navy Island. Three subsequent attempts by patriots to attack across Lake Erie on the ice were easily foiled. On February 22 Van Rensselaer occupied Hickory Island in the St. Lawrence River near Gananoque, but was quickly persuaded by the bitter cold to return to the warmth of the American shore. Robert Nelson's attempt to establish a republic in Lower Canada foundered on February 28, when Mississquoi volunteers chased

his patriotes back into Vermont where they were disarmed by a detachment of American regular troops.<sup>10</sup> Sir John Colborne's letter of March 24 to Bond Head's successor, Sir George Arthur, stated the problem quite simply:

The American Government must be anxious to avoid a war, but if we should again have disturbances in either Province, we can only depend on our own force and exertions to defend the Colonies against the attacks which will be made upon us by the people of the adjoining states. It is my intention to send two Regiments to the Upper Province as soon as our reinforcements arrive.<sup>11</sup>

The large British reinforcement which reached Quebec in May included two battalions of Her Majesty's Foot Guards and two cavalry regiments, and increased the regular strength in the Canadas to 283 officers and 7,055 other ranks. The Foot Guards remained at Quebec City. The cavalry regiments were sent to Montreal, where there already were the 2/1st Royal Scots and the 85th Regiment. The remainder of Colborne's infantry regiments were disposed as follows: 66th at Trois-Rivières, 15th at Chambly, 43rd at Laprairie, 71st on St. Helen's Island, 34th at Merrickville,

10. A. B. Corey, The Crisis of 1830-1842 in Canadian-American Relations, op. cit.

11. C. R. Sanderson (ed.), The Arthur Papers: Being the Canadian Papers, Mainly Confidential, Private and Demi-Official of Sir George Arthur, last Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Toronto, Toronto Public Library, 1957, Vol. I, Colborne to Arthur, March 24, 1838.

83rd at Kingston, 24th at Toronto and the 32nd at London.<sup>12</sup> Colborne specified that the regular troops in Upper Canada were to be kept concentrated and away from the border, except for detachments of 100 rank and file at each of Niagara and Amherstburg. This would facilitate the launching of counter-attacks against any attempted invasion, lessen the danger of "incidents" involving American citizens and provide less opportunity for desertion.<sup>13</sup> Those volunteers and militia anxious to get back to their farms had already been released<sup>14</sup> and the remaining corps were progressively disbanded during June and July.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile Captain Williams Sandom, R.N. had re-opened the dockyard at Kingston and the naval personnel he had brought up river from Quebec were manning 10 steam

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12. W.O. 17/1542, General Monthly Return, Canada, June 1, 1838.

13. Arthur Papers, op. cit., Vol. I, Colborne to Arthur, May 11, 1838.

14. Ibid., Arthur to Colborne, April 25, 1838.

15. W.O. 43/72, Paid Corps in Upper Canada during winter 1837-8, n.d.; Paid Corps in Lower Canada during winter 1837-8, n.d.

vessels that had been converted into gunboats for service on Lake Ontario or Lake Erie.<sup>16</sup>

Continued signs of discontent in Lower Canada were reported by military garrison commanders throughout the summer. Members of the Hunters' Lodges, a secret brotherhood that spread across the border from Vermont and New York, were talking openly of a "great hunt". Even though the British Army's effective strength was increased to 417 officers and 10,271 other ranks by the arrival of the 73rd and 83rd Regiments of Foot,<sup>17</sup> approximately 10,000 volunteers were embodied in Lower Canada for general or local service during the last days of October and first days of November.<sup>18</sup> At the behest of Sir John Colborne, the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada did his best to recruit

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16. K.R. Macpherson, "List of Vessels employed on British Naval Service on the Great Lakes, 1755-1875", Ontario History, Vol. LV (September, 1963), p. 178. Also see Richard A. Preston, "Broad Pennants on Point Frederick," Ontario History, Vol. L (Spring, 1958).

17. W.O. 17/1542, General Monthly Return, Canada, Nov. 1, 1838.

18. P.A.C., Durham Papers, Vol. 17, "Return of Volunteer Force, Oct. 30, 1838. See also Militia General Orders for Lower Canada.

upwards of 12,000 provincial troops there.<sup>19</sup>

On November 4, Robert Nelson's second attempt to proclaim a Republic of Lower Canada was frustrated at Napierville by local volunteers corps. The continuing but dispirited rebels fled to the safety of Vermont on November 9, as Colborne's column of regulars approached from Montreal. On the following day a last pocket of resistance at Beauharnois was easily dispersed by a detachment of the 93rd Foot, 200 volunteers and a band of Indians from St. Regis. The Hunters who crossed the St. Lawrence River and seized a stone windmill east of Prescott stood off a sizable force of regulars, volunteers and militia for five days before surrendering on November 17. The 200 Hunters from Detroit who landed near Windsor on December 4, however, quickly fled on the approach of two militia companies outfitted in red tunics. These events discredited the Hunters: the better class of American now withdraw his tacit support, the United States Government despatched additional regular troops to its border posts and Major-General Winfield Scott instructed his subordinates to report

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19. Arthur Papers, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 293, 299 and 336.

every substantial rumour to the nearest British garrison commander; the State of New York placed militia companies on duty at other border points.<sup>20</sup>

During the winter of 1838-1839 about 21,000 provincial troops remained on continuous service in the Canadas. Two further regiments of British infantry then made the overland trip from New Brunswick to increase Sir John Colborne's regular strength to almost 12,000 all ranks.<sup>21</sup> In consequence of the so-called Aroostook War, when the Governor of Maine ordered state militia to advance into this lumbering area disputed with New Brunswick in February, 1839, four companies of the 11th Foot were ordered back from Quebec to the Madawaska settlement. Major-General Sir John Harvey, the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, called out his militia and evolved elaborate plans to protect the vital overland military route to Canada.<sup>22</sup> As directed by the American Government in Washington, however,

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20. Oscar A. Kinchen, The Rise and Fall of the Patriot Hunters, New York, Bookman Associates, 1956, pp. 85-92.

21. C.O. 17/1543, General Monthly Return, Canada, March 1, 1839.

22. C.O. 188/64, Harvey to Normanby, April 25, 1839.

Major-General Winfield Scott was able to arrange a modus vivendi between the Governor of Maine and Sir John Harvey and secure the withdrawal of all troops from the disputed area before the end of March, without any casualties having been incurred.

During the month of April, Colborne reduced the number of provincial volunteers on duty in Lower Canada to 300 cavalry and 700 infantry, who would garrison a chain of frontier posts in the Eastern Townships.<sup>23</sup> About 3,500 of those recruited in Upper Canada for 18 months service were retained on duty, organized as a troop of dragoons and five battalions of infantry.<sup>24</sup> The six British infantry regiments assigned to Upper Canada were now concentrated at Kingston, Toronto, London and Amherstburg. As Colborne had very realistically put the matter in an earlier letter to Arthur:

We shall however be at the mercy of the Vagabonds, and a constant expense must be incurred in maintaining a large regular force, and a well organized Militia, prepared to concentrate at a short notice. The periodical alarms to which we are opposed, and the dread of an attack from Pirates formidable from the

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23. Arthur Papers, Vol. II, p. 121.

24. W.O. 1/536, Arthur to Thomson, Feb. 15, 1840.

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uncertainty as to the extent of their means, will be ruinous to Upper Canada, unless we have a disposable force at all times ready to repel invasion, without calling the agriculturalists from their homes. A more expensive system could not be adopted than the one to which we have been compelled to resort, in consequence of the menaces of the American population on our frontier. The same game may be continued with little inconvenience to the Patriots for many years. If we were to diminish our force in this district, there can be no doubt that the hatred towards us, and the virulence which has been demonstrated by the conduct of the adjoining States, would be again demonstrated by the borderers.<sup>25</sup>

Further American encroachments into the territory disputed between Maine and New Brunswick caused two companies of the 11th Regiment to return to Lake Temiscouata in November, 1839. Here they built a fort which they occupied for six months. There had, however, been no more incidents along the Canadian border and the seven steamers leased as gunboats were returned to their owners, leaving the Royal Navy with only four vessels actually purchased for further service. During October, 1839, Sir John Colborne had returned to England and was raised to the peerage as Lord Seaton. His opinion, as set forth in a memorandum of January 1, 1840 addressed to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, was that permanent forts should be erected at the border

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25. Arthur Papers, Vol. II, p. 43.

points where he had found it desirable to have blockhouses erected in 1838. Such forts, garrisoned by provincial troops, would reassure the inhabitants that all was well and also would make it possible to keep the bulk of the British troops concentrated for use as counter-attacking forces. Fillibusters were, he felt, most likely to congregate along the American shore of the St. Clair, Detroit and Niagara rivers and along the sector of the St. Lawrence River between Brockville and Prescott. He assumed that the "American Patriots, with an irregular force, would not venture to cross at any other points, aware of the difficulty of returning to their own shores, in case of failing to establish a communication with the disaffected".<sup>26</sup>

His successor as Commander of the Forces in North America, Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Downes Jackson, viewed the overall situation differently. Sensing that growing numbers of Americans in all walks of life were coming around to the belief that it was the manifest destiny of the United States to extend the American Revolution over the whole continent, Jackson felt that any future threat to British North America would come from the armed forces of

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26. H.O. 1/536, Seaton to Lord John Russell, Jan, 1, 1840.

the United States. The largest element of the small American regular army was still in Florida, fighting the Seminole Indians, but the number of troops along the Canadian border from Sault Ste. Marie to Eastport had now quadrupled to about 3,000 officers and enlisted men.<sup>27</sup> In 1839 Congress had voted money to renovate existing forts and work was immediately commenced at Fort Niagara and Oswego.

Recommendations subsequently made by a Board of Engineers led to considerable expenditure on new forts near Detroit and Buffalo, and at Rouse's Point on Lake Champlain.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore Sir Richard Jackson's submission of February 25, 1840 to the new Governor General, Charles Poulett Thomson, who was soon to become Lord Sydenham, urged the construction of permanent defensive works in front of Montreal as well as the continuance of a large force of British regulars in North America. Jackson's next paragraphs dealt with communications:

The provinces of Upper and Lower Canada must support each other, and the defence of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick should also be based upon the same principle, indeed this system of general succour should be extended

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27. Frank Paul Prucha, "Distribution of Regular Army Troops before the Civil War," Military Affairs, Vol. XVI (Winter 1952), p. 171.

28. C.P. Stacey, "The Myth of the Unguarded Frontier, 1815-1871" American Historical Review, Vol. LVI (October, 1950), p. 16.

throughout British America, and it has been partially provided for, by the Lieut. Governor and Legislature of New Brunswick [which had agreed during the brief Aroostook war scare that 1,200 militia might be embodied for one year's continuous service].

It is obvious that a purely defensive force should be restricted to what may be deemed strictly necessary, but in the Provinces of North America (and particularly in the Canadas) it should be available for purposes of general defence, so as to afford support to, or supply the want of, the Regular Troops according to circumstances. If this principle be correct, and it has been advantageously acted upon in Great Britain and Ireland, an extensive reduction in one Province of the Canadas does not warrant the inference that a proportional reduction may be expedient in the other although equally quiet.<sup>29</sup>

The Governor General's instructions had emphasized the need to implement certain of Lord Durham's recommendations as soon as possible, particularly the political union of the two Canadas which he was to accomplish during 1840; but he had also been instructed "not to permit Maine to occupy or possess Land to the North of the St. John's and to maintain in perfect security, the communication by the Madawaska between Fredericton and Quebec," and to do whatever was "indispensable" for that purpose.<sup>30</sup>

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29. W.O. 1/536, Jackson to Governor General, Feb. 25, 1840.

30. C.O. 42/312, Sydenham to Harvey, Nov. 23, 1840.

When the Board of Ordnance in London protested to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies about the cost of maintaining even the existing 16 fortified posts in Canada as they were, the Governor General replied to Lord John Russell's letter that the geography of Canada precluded any idea that these forts were occupied only because of the late rebellions. According to Lord Sydenham's letter of August 24, 1840:

The stations at Lake Temisquata, at the Dégété, at Philipsburg, at Prescott, at London, at Chippewa, at Drummondville, at Fort Colborne, at Queenston, at Waterloo Ferry, at Chatham, Sandwich & Windsor, thirteen out of the sixteen places enumerated, have no more to do with any revolt than they have with the Irish Rebellion. They are all protective and precautionary measures, whether well or ill judged it is not my purpose to determine, against aggression from the United States. 31

The makeshift gunboats still in service, Traveller and Experiment on Lake Ontario and Toronto on Lake Erie, were adequate to cope with fillibustering activities, but not with any proper war vessels the United States Navy might place on the inland waters. The Admiralty was having a paddle-sloop, H.M.S. Minos, built at Chippewa for service on Lake Erie, but Lord Sydenham's letter of October 12, 1840 requested Lord John Russell to try and secure a similar war vessel for Lake Ontario. "It is of the utmost consequences,"

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31. W.O.1/536, Sydenham to Russell, Aug. 24, 1840.

he wrote, "to have a force on which we can call there. We could hold that Lake - not so Lake Erie, out of which the Yankees would drive us at once."<sup>32</sup> In consequence two paddle-sloops were built at Kingston, and named H.M.S. Cherokee and H.M.S. Mohawk.

During November, 1840 Sir Richard Jackson provided Lord Sydenham with a much more detailed memorandum on Canadian defence. The Commander of the Forces took for granted that Lord Sydenham was aware Quebec was the key to any successful defence, but he reiterated what he had written earlier about the need for permanent fortifications in the Montreal area. Then he elaborated on the Duke of Wellington's comments respecting the fortifications recommended by the Carmichael-Smyth Commission of 1825:

... without works of one kind or another, the Canadas cannot be considered safe. Well disciplined troops may defend a land frontier against a very superior number of troops of inferior quality, when the communications are sufficiently good to admit of concentration with celerity and accuracy of time; but the Canadian frontier resembles a maritime frontier, and our communications cannot be depended upon.

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32. Paul Knapland (ed.), Letters from Lord Sydenham Governor-General of Canada, 1839-1841, to Lord John Russell, London, Allen & Unwin, 1931, p. 97.

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The proposed works would be bulwarks, behind which our small but superior force might move and act with promptitude and energy.

This frontier resembles at present a long weak line of battle, liable to be pierced or turned, and overwhelmed at points decisive of the struggle.

The works proposed by the United States are evidently calculated to form a basis of offensive operations. What have they to apprehend from us on this frontier?

If permanent works on this border were proscribed on either side by treaty, or regulated as to number and quality, like the vessels of war on the lakes, the advantage would be wholly on their side; defensive works are absolutely necessary for the weaker party against such disparity of force.

I have scarcely mentioned the important subject of interior communications, or the positions (according to the ordinary acceptation of the term,) because the former are changing every year, in an improving country, and positions vary with them. Neither have I adverted to the assistance to be derived from the Indians. It is a description of assistance that, from all I have heard of it, ought not, if possible, to be employed; but I understand that the Indian will not be quiet in war, and we may be obliged to submit to this necessity. 33

The Board of Ordnance countered that not even the most elaborate fortifications would guarantee successful defence against a rapidly growing United States. According

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33. W.O. 1/536, Memorandum upon the Canadian Frontier, November, 1840.

to the letter its Secretary addressed to Lord John Russell on February 18, 1841:

The successful defence then of the Canadas must, after all depend on the spirit, the loyalty, and the exertions of the people of that country, (in conjunction with the army in the field). If they are heart and hand with us, it may fairly be hoped and expected, that any attempt at invasion would be defeated, as such attempts already have been. If, on the other hand, the inhabitants are not disposed to join us in endeavouring to repel an invading force, no extent of fortification would afford a certain security.<sup>34</sup>

The Duke of Wellington's opinion, after he had read all the correspondence, was that the British Government had an obligation to defend people who had willingly continued within the British Empire. Unless it were agreed that the provinces of British North America should be properly defended if attacked, however, it would be "more wise, beneficent and fair" to abandon them now and let them make the best possible bargain with their American neighbours.<sup>35</sup>

Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Jackson's request that 2,329 provincial troops be continued on duty in Canada after their existing engagements expired in April, 1842 was

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34. W.O. 1/536, Vivian to Russell, Feb. 18, 1841.

35. W.O. 1/537, "Memorandum on the Defence of Her Majesty's Dominions in North America," March 31, 1841.

approved by Lord Sydenham's successor, Sir Charles Bagot.<sup>36</sup> Anglo-American matters in dispute were resolved on August 9, 1842, when Lord Ashburton and Daniel Webster, the U.S. Secretary of State, signed a treaty in Washington. The United States received the largest portion of the disputed territory along the north-eastern boundary, but Webster had initially accepted Lord Ashburton's contention that British retention of the Madawaska-Temiscouata Road was essential for maintenance of all year round communication between Halifax and Quebec.<sup>37</sup> During the following month of September, the two battalions of Foot Guards returned to England. They were followed shortly by the 7th Hussars. Sir Charles Bagot's despatch of January 24, 1843 recommended the disbandment of all the provincial troops except an infantry company of 100 negroes and three troops of cavalry totalling 120 all ranks, and a considerable reduction in the British garrison.<sup>38</sup> The coloured troops had no love for the United States, where they or their parents had lived as slaves, and they were less likely than British troops to suffer from the malaria which was then prevalent in certain border districts of Upper Canada. The provincial cavalry

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36. W.O. 1/538, Bagot to Stanley, Feb. 7, 1842.

37. C.P. Stacey, "The Backbone of Canada," Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, 1953, p. 4.

38. W.O. 1/539, Bagot to Stanley, Jan. 24, 1843.

continued to patrol the open country along the 45th parallel of latitude and watch for British deserters trying to make their way to the United States and a new life. Bagot's successor, Sir Charles Metcalfe, explained in a letter of June 22, why regular cavalry-men could not be trusted to serve along the land frontier:

...in addition to any other motives that may account for desertion, the Regular Cavalry would have the temptation of selling Her Majesty's Horses and Appointments in the neighbouring States; whereas the Provincial Cavalry, being mounted on their own Horses, have no such temptation, and are altogether of a class that have no inducement to desert. 39

The temporary barracks hired during the emergency were vacated and the British regular strength was reduced to 7,474 all ranks, compared to the peak strength of 12,452 all ranks in early 1842.<sup>40</sup>

In May, 1844 Sir Richard Jackson appointed a commission to study the military situation in Canada. The chairman was the Commanding Royal Engineer, Colonel W.E. Holoway; members were Captain Edward Boxer, R.N., who was employed by the Canadian Government as Harbour Master at Quebec, Mr. David Taylor, late Master Attendant of the

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39. W.O. 1/552, Metcalfe to Stanley, June 22, 1843.

40. W.O. 1/552, Jackson to Stanley, May 14, 1845.

Kingston Dockyard, and Lieutenant H. C. B. Moody, R.E.<sup>41</sup> Working separately, Captain Boxer and Lieutenant Moody visited all the American ports on the Great Lakes and estimated their capabilities in the event of war.<sup>42</sup>

Many Americans were disturbed by the presence on the Great Lakes of British war vessels.<sup>43</sup> The American Government had recognized the British need to convert local steam vessels into gunboats during the crisis months of 1838, but the paddle-sloops Minos, Cherokee and Mohawk were proper war vessels, so the United States Navy had launched a larger iron side-wheel war vessel, U.S.S. Michigan, at Erie, Pennsylvania in 1843. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen, protested this American action on July 23, 1844, but neither the British nor American Government was convinced that the Rush-Bagot Agreement applied to steam vessels. On September 5 the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies

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41. W.O. 1/552, Boxer to Higginson, June 4, 1845.

42. Adm. 7/625, Cathcart to Stanley, Dec. 11, 1845.

43. The Times, London, Oct. 21, 1841.

suggested to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, that something would have to be done. His memorandum, however, referred to the previously expressed opinions of the Duke of Wellington and others who had agreed:

...that in the event of war, it would be hopeless to attempt to maintain the Naval superiority of the Lakes, with the local advantages possessed by the United States: and a large and expensive Establishment at Kingston was consequently put down. It was however intended to provide for the Military defence of Canada, according to a plan laid down by the Duke of Wellington in 1826: but for one cause or another, though much has been said about these works, I am afraid little or nothing has been done.... The whole plan involved an expense, if I remember right, considerably exceeding a Million Sterling: and I own that I should very much hesitate about spending such a sum on such an object, in the present state of our connexion with Canada. Still some course ought to be decided on, and acted on, by the Cabinet: and I doubt whether the measure suggested by Aberdeen, of building up their present force, and then making a new agreement will be sufficient or advisable.<sup>44</sup>

Two days later Sir Robert Peel returned a considered reply:

A great expenditure on fortifications and Military defences by land might be a protective measure against the hostile disposition and hostile preparations on the Lakes, of the Americans. But the cost of them is not only

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44. Paul Knaplund (ed.), "The Armaments on the Great Lakes, 1844," American Historical Review, Vol. XL (July, 1935), pp. 473-478.

useless but money thrown away so far as Canadian feeling is concerned. The progress of such defences too is so slow - that which is done is so liable to be questioned by Military Men - may perhaps be so inapplicable to purposes of defence, some years hence, against novel methods of attack - that I do not see much prospect of controlling effectually the American tendencies to hostility by costly outlays on land fortifications. 45

Matters were soon complicated by the election of James K. Polk as President of the United States. Polk had campaigned with the ominous slogan of "Fifty-four Forty or Fight", which was a demand for the whole of the disputed Oregon territory where an uneasy modus vivendi between Americans and British had continued since 1818. The British Government had no desire to go to war over "miles of pine swamp" when some sort of settlement could be negotiated, but President Polk's inaugural speech of March 4, 1845 indicated that he was not willing to arbitrate.<sup>46</sup> The British Government did nothing to increase the strength of its troops in North America, but money was allocated for the construction of four Martello towers at Kingston<sup>47</sup> and Sir

45. Ibid.

46. James O. McCabe, "Arbitration and the Oregon Question," Canadian Historical Review, Vol XLI (December, 1960), p. 308.

47. P.A.C., G.1/109, Stanley to Master General of the Ordnance, Jan. 23, 1845.

Charles Metcalfe, was instructed in a letter dated April 4, to persuade private contractors to build steam vessels which might be expropriated and converted into gunboats for service on the Great Lakes if the need arose.<sup>48</sup>

Sir Charles Metcalfe quickly arranged to have three such steam vessels built under private auspices. The naval dockyard at Kingston was placed on full establishment and work also began on four Martello towers about the harbour. Two young officers, Lieutenants H.J. Warre and A. Vavasour, were ordered to accompany Governor Sir George Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company on his journey by canoe to the Red River Colony and then continue west to make a military appreciation of the Oregon territory.<sup>49</sup> Wearing civilian clothes they set out on May 5; although gone more than a year, they sent back reports from time to time. Their first report, written from Fort Garry, stated that it would not be practicable for regular troops to travel the canoe and portage route they had just completed.<sup>50</sup>

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48. P.A.C., G. 1/109, Stanley to Metcalfe, April 4, 1845.

49. W.O. 1/552, Metcalfe to Stanley, May 19, 1845.

50. Ibid., July 26, 1845 encloses report by Warre and Vavasour dated June 10, 1845.

Early in June, 1845 Lieutenant-General Sir Richard Jackson suddenly died of apoplexy. The spread of Sir Charles Metcalfe's cancerous growth soon indicated that he had not long to live. Therefore General Lord Cathart was appointed both Governor General and Commander of the Forces. He immediately began familiarizing himself with the historical background of Canadian defence policy. He then studied the recent reports by Colonel Holloway, R.E. and Captain Boxer, R.N. On December 11, 1845 he set forth his own views in a long letter addressed to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies:

There can be no doubt that the Americans must possess great advantages at the commencement of a War, from their resources being so near at hand that they can be brought immediately to bear upon any point, or in any direction in which they may be required, through the facilities afforded by their extensive lines of Inland Navigation or Railroad; Whereas all our means whether for defence or for aggression, must be transported across the Atlantic.

If Canada is to be defended with success this can only be looked for in our being able from the very earliest moment to acquire and to maintain the command of the Navigation of the Lakes. This must at all hazards be done with reference to Lake Ontario, and our utmost endeavours must also be exerted to put afloat as respectable a Force upon Lakes Erie and Huron as means and circumstances will admit of, for the same object; and if that is not to be effected so completely, in consequence

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of the difficulty of obtaining access to them by large vessels owing to the defects in the Locks of the Welland Canal and to other local causes; this Force should at all events be sufficient for the protection of our own Coasts from Invasion or insult.

Without being prepared with a sufficient Naval Force upon the Lakes, or the means of creating one at the moment when it may be wanted, the opportunity must be lost which perhaps might never be regained, of striking the only blow which would be calculated to paralyze the enemy's measures, and to retard their operations until time were afforded for the arrival from England of the reinforcements of all descriptions, which would doubtless be sent out as soon as possible.

In my estimation the whole success of the War would in a great measure depend upon our being able to take the initiative upon the first commencement of hostilities, instead of waiting until the enemy were fully prepared to act upon the offensive; for by a combined naval and military attack we might succeed in capturing or destroying the Vessels in the American Harbours on the Lakes, and disposing in the same manner of their Military or Naval Stores before they would have time to strengthen their defences, or to reinforce the Garrisons of their Ports, which from their having few Regular Troops, are kept up upon the lowest possible scale.

Every moments delay must add to the difficulty of such operations, and render the prospect of their success less certain, and therefore I cannot too strongly support the views which have been expressed by Captain Boxer... that Her Majesty's Government should cause to be sent out immediately to this country the means of arming & equipping a sufficient number of Steamboats or Propellers [i.e.

screw rather than paddle-wheel steamers]; that is to say, the machinery required for their fittings; which might be applied either to Boats built or put together expressly for the purpose; or to the schooners or other vessels of the Country which might be of a size and description, capable of being converted into Vessels of War....

Without the command of the Lakes, or having at least a Force upon them that might make itself respected, I am satisfied that no Military positions that could be taken up to protect the exposed Frontiers of Canada West, could be maintained without the risk of their being turned by the enemy effecting a landing in their rear, at the same time that they might be attacked by a superior Force in front.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately the enlargement of the Lachine Canal would not be completed until 1847, no steps had been taken to enlarge the Grenville Canal, and work on the Welland Canal was being hindered by local jobbery.

On March 26, 1846 Lord Cathcart reverted to the theme that next to nothing had been done about fortifications despite all the surveys and plans made. His letter to the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies emphasized that the approaches to Montreal should be strengthened. He was not convinced, however, that fortresses with large garrisons were necessary in Canada, where climate and topography would make lengthy sieges improbable.<sup>52</sup> The elderly Duke of

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51. Adm. 7/625, Cathcart to Stanley, Dec. 11, 1845.

52. W.O. 1/554, Cathcart to Gladstone, March 26, 1846.

Wellington, once again serving as Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, was inclined to agree when his opinion was sought.<sup>53</sup>

Wellington also agreed that the Hudson's Bay Company's request for regular troops to garrison Fort Garry in the Red River Colony might be granted on other than purely military grounds.<sup>54</sup> The request had been prompted by rumours of American troops at Pembina, only about 50 miles from Fort Garry, during the summer of 1845 and the Hudson's Bay Company was sufficiently alarmed to offer to pay the whole cost of the expedition, including the military stores which would be needed at both Upper and Lower Fort Garry.<sup>55</sup> During the summer of 1846 Major J. Crofton of the 6th Regiment travelled by ship from Ireland to Hudson's Bay with 16 officers, 364 other ranks, 17 wives and 19 children. The final lap of the journey was made in York boats.<sup>56</sup>

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53. W.O. 1/555, Wellington to Gladstone, April 29, 1846.

54. W.O. 1/555, Wellington to Gladstone, March 28 and May 2, 1846.

55. W.O. 1/552, Simpson to Metcalfe, Nov. 6, 1845.

56. C/831, Crofton to D.C.M.G., Montreal, Sept. 13, 1846; W.O. 1/557, Crofton to Somerset, Sept. 15, 1846.

Common sense had persuaded President Polk to agree to arbitration of the Oregon dispute.<sup>57</sup> A settlement was reached on June 15, 1846. Sir Robert Peel's Government was defeated on June 25 and replaced by a Whig Ministry. The new Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, and his Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Lord Grey, decided that Lord Cathcart should be replaced as Governor General by someone who was less war-minded and more capable of introducing responsible government in Canada. Lord Elgin, who was married to a daughter of the late Lord Durham, was sent to Canada.

No one seems to have thought to cancel work on the four Martello towers at Kingston. In December instructions were merely issued to defer all works not already commenced.<sup>58</sup> Orders to withdraw the British garrison from Fort Garry arrived too late in the summer of 1847 to be implemented until the next spring.<sup>59</sup> During the summer of 1848 the

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57. McCabe, "Arbitration and the Oregon Question," op. cit., p. 324ff.

58. British Parliamentary Papers, 1849, Vol. IX, no 499, "Second Report from Select Committee on Army and Ordnance Expenditure," p. lvii.

59. C/831, Wellington to Officer Commanding at Fort Garry, June 4, 1847.

garrison sailed for Great Britain in the ships that had brought out a company of 70 pensioners, who were to be maintained as soldier-settlers at Red River, together with their 45 wives and 37 children, by the Hudson's Bay Company.<sup>60</sup>

By this time responsible government was becoming a reality in Canada and Lord Grey was arguing that "now the Canadians have self Govmt. so completely granted to them they ought also to pay all its expenses including military protection..."<sup>61</sup> The laissez-faire theories of the Manchester School of economists had now gained wide acceptance in Great Britain: while there should be no unseemly haste in granting complete independence to colonies, it was felt to be inevitable and their inhabitants should get used to the idea of bearing the cost of defence forces in peace time.<sup>62</sup> Lord Elgin, in a long private letter of

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60. W.O. 43/89 contains copy of movement instructions.

61. Sir Arthur G. Doughty (ed.), The Elgin-Grey Papers 1846-1852, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1937, Vol. I, p.126.

62. C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871: A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government, Revised Edition, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1963, is the definitive study of the reasons for the British Army leaving Canada.

December 6, 1848, however, objected to asking Canadians to bear any share of the cost of its British garrison. "Canada has a special claim for protection beyond any other Colony," he wrote, "because it is the fact of her connexion with Great Britain which exposes her to hostile aggression - She has no enemy to dread but the States, and they would cease to be dangerous to her if she were annexed."<sup>63</sup> Personally he did not think there would be any widespread protest in Canada against the number of British troops being reduced, if the winter passed quietly without any cause for alarm. There could, of course, be no reason to expect British troops to perform purely police duties in a self-governing colony. Thus the defence situation, as Lord Elgin saw it, had become quite simple:

What You really want then is a sufficient body of troops to occupy the forts, to form a nucleus around which a great force mainly composed of militia may be gathered in case of regular warfare, and to give the peaceful residents on the frontier, who have the misfortune to dwell in the vicinity of a population combining the material force of high civilization with the loose political morality & organization of barbarous hordes, a reasonable security against marauding incursions.

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63. The Elgin-Grey Papers, 1846-1852, op. cit., Vol.I, p.267.

## BORDER PROBLEMS

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There are two ways in which America may give us serious annoyance here and occupation for our troops - either by going regularly to war with the view of wresting Canada from England, or by permitting bands of citizens under the denomination of fox hunters, buffalo hunters, - sympathisers, or what not, to invade this territory - If she prefers the former game I trust it will be played out by Her Majesty's fleets off New York and Boston, and by my old friends the West India Regiments in Florida & South Carolina, as well as here by Regulars and Militia - And, as to the other species of desultory warfare, I must own that I have little apprehension that it will be attended with any material or permanent results unless there be widespread disaffection in the Colony itself - Although, unquestionably, if we were to do nothing to defend the Colonists against such attacks, the borderers might conceive a just indignation and listen to the suggestions of those who whisper to them that the honour of being subjects to Her Majesty is hardly worth the cost. 64

The size of the British Army in Canada was a political rather than a military question, but senior officers in Canada were obsessed by the experiences of the past decade and were intent only on keeping their forces on a war footing at all times. Was invasion possible, Elgin asked, with the small United States Army dispersed over so immense a territory? Were enough Canadians sufficiently disgruntled with their present form of responsible government to encourage American filibusters to enter Canada?

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64. Ibid., p. 268.

Lord Grey's continued suggestions that a policy should be adopted of "cautiously proceeding to throw more of the military expenditure upon the Colonies" were prompted by the criticism directed at the Government by Cobdenites in the House of Commons at Westminster.<sup>65</sup> Lord Elgin remained firm in his own convictions, however, and replied on December 19, 1849:

I have always told you that if you would do it quietly you might reduce yr garrison - You are just as little able to cope with the power of the States with 5000 men as with 3000 - You may therefore if you please largely reduce the staff and more moderately the men - leaving the remainder in the best barracks - I think you may do this without in any material way increasing the tendency towards annexation - provided always that you make no noise about it - You must do this however if you attempt it on the authority of the home Govt. If you wait till Doomsday you will never get a military man here to agree to such a course. 66

The appointment of Commander of the Forces had been abolished a few months earlier and completely separate commands created for Canada and Nova Scotia.<sup>67</sup> The last of the provincial troops, three troops of cavalry, were

65. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 448.

66. Ibid., Vol. I, p. 560.

67. W.O. 1/559, Grey to Elgin, June 14, 1849.

disbanded on April 30, 1850;<sup>68</sup> the company of coloured infantry had been paid off two years earlier.<sup>69</sup> Lord Grey's despatch of March 14, 1851 followed the line suggested by Lord Elgin. Except for a number of enrolled pensioners who would be settled on crown lands<sup>70</sup> on the understanding that they would be available to assist in the maintenance of law and order as was the practice in Great Britain,<sup>71</sup> "the troops maintained in Canada should be confined to the garrisons of two or three fortified posts of importance, probably only Quebec and Kingston."<sup>72</sup> These, together with a properly maintained militia, should be sufficient to provide security as long as good Anglo-American relations continued. Should the Canadian Government desire to have British troops continue to garrison other existing posts,

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68. W.O. 1/560, Grey to Elgin, Dec. 22, 1849.

69. W.O. 1/560, Falkland to Elgin, Dec. 30, 1848.

70. Story may be traced on W.O. 4/287.

71. F.C. Mather, "Army Pensioners and the Maintenance of Civil Order in Early Nineteenth Century England," Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research, Vol. XXXVI (September, 1958), pp. 110-124.

72. G. 5/37, Grey to Elgin, March 14, 1851.

this could be arranged "if the actual cost thus incurred were provided for by the Province". Canada was requested to assume the cost of maintaining the canals built by Britain "at a very heavy cost, chiefly with a view to the military defence of the Province". Yet Lord Grey's despatch made it quite clear that the British Government still fully acknowledged responsibility for defending any of its colonies against any foreign aggressor.

The strength of the British Army was soon reduced by about 1,400 rank and file and the military posts at Trois-Rivières, Sorel, Chambly, Laprairie, Brockville, Chatham, Amherstburg and Penetanguishene were abandoned.<sup>73</sup> By January 1, 1852 there were only 4,742 rank and file in Canada and 2,319 in the whole Nova Scotia command.<sup>74</sup> During that year the Royal Navy's paddle-sloops Minos, Cherokee and Mohawk were paid off and the dockyard at Kingston was closed, Lord Grey having agreed earlier with the Admiralty opinion that there was no point in maintaining an inland naval

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73. G. 12/66, Elgin to Pakington, Oct. 27, 1852.

74. Relevant monthly strength returns on H.O. 17/1556 and W.O. 17/2399.

establishment in peace time when the United States might, if it so desired, establish at any time a larger one with the greater resources that it had immediately available.<sup>75</sup> As Lord Elgin had predicted, none of those reductions caused more than mild expressions of regret and no effort was expended in improving the militia. Canadians were not interested in military affairs, at a time when they were enjoying friendly relations with the United States and so much money and energy were necessary for the internal development of their province.<sup>76</sup>

During August 1854 the British Government ordered the withdrawal of three companies of artillery and three battalions of infantry from Canada and a single company of artillery and regiment of infantry from Nova Scotia.<sup>77</sup> These were required for service in the War with Russia which had been declared on March 28, 1854. This transfer left in Canada only the 26th Regiment at Quebec City, the Royal Canadian Rifles split between Montreal and Kingston,

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75. The Grey-Elgin Papers 1846-1852, Vol. I, p. 266; Vol. IV, 1604.

76. C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871, op. cit., pp. 81-86.

77. British Parliamentary Papers, 1856, no. 289, Newcastle to Rowan, Aug. 18, 1854.

and two companies of Royal Artillery.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the Royal Canadian Rifles consisted entirely of older men not likely to desert from border posts because of their service towards a pension and thus was not as fully combatant a corps as regiments of the line. A battalion of infantry remained at Halifax, less companies at Fredericton and Saint John, and there were detachments of the remaining company of Royal Artillery at each; but token garrisons no longer continued in Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island.<sup>79</sup>

The Legislatures of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia sent Addresses of Loyalty to Queen Victoria and the respective Lieutenant-Governors were led to believe that local militia might be embodied for garrison duty should the British Army consider further withdrawal of regular troops.<sup>80</sup> Governor James Douglas of the far western colony of Vancouver Island offered to raise an irregular

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78. Monthly strength returns on M.O. 17/1558.

79. Monthly strength returns on M.O. 17/2401.

80. Correspondence is on M.O. 1/551.

force of white men and Indians for possible employment against Russian fur traders, but he was advised that the Royal Navy would provide any measure of protection that might be necessary.<sup>81</sup>

More positive action was taken in Canada. The provincial government employed 150 of the enrolled pensioners sent out earlier from Great Britain under the aegis of Lord Grey for garrison duty at forts vacated by the British regulars.<sup>82</sup> On October 13, 1854 the Canadian Government appointed a Commission to investigate and report on the best means of reorganizing the militia and providing an "efficient and economical system of Public defence".<sup>83</sup> It was also directed to plan for a more efficient police in the cities and larger towns, since regular troops would no longer be available as an "aid to the civil power". Included in the Commission's membership was Colonel George de Rottenburg, then Quartermaster General of the British Army in North America.

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81. W.O. 1/551, Douglas to Newcastle, May 16, 1854; Newcastle to Douglas, Aug. 5, 1854.

82. C.O. 42/603, Head to Labouchere, Jan 12, 1856. Also see correspondence on W.O. 6/89.

83. P.A.C., E/State Book O, Memorandum by MacNab, Oct. 13, 1854.

"The defence of the Province, from the nature of the Country, must at all times be mainly dependent upon Artillery and Infantry," the report submitted by the Commission on February 19, 1855 emphasized; "the services of Cavalry being principally confined to keeping up communications, and to patrol and outpost duties."<sup>84</sup> The "most efficient, economical and popular system of public defence" would be the formation of a volunteer force of 4,047 all ranks. This should be organized into 16 troops of cavalry, seven field batteries and five foot companies of artillery, and 50 companies of rifles. The resulting Militia Bill was opposed by the opposition parties on general principle and because Canadians were reluctant to assume any real responsibility for the cost of defence, but it passed its third reading in the Legislative Assembly by a vote of 58 to 34 on April 11, 1855.<sup>85</sup>

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84. Report of the Commission appointed to investigate and report upon the best means of re-organizing the Militia of Canada and upon an improved system of Police, Quebec, Desbarats, 1855, p. 3.

85. C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871, p. 94.

Naturally the British Government was pleased. Yet the Colonial Secretary's letter of April 13, which the new Governor General, Sir Edmund Head, sent to the Legislature, emphasized that there would be no change in British military policy. It would, he wrote:

... remain charged as before with the supply and maintenance of Military force for the defence of Canada, as of any other part of Her Majesty's dominions, in the event of it being menaced by foreign arms. They propose, also, to continue to maintain the force now existing in Canada, or whatever force may be strictly required, for the Military occupation of the few posts of first-class importance, so as to form a nucleus for the defence of the Province.<sup>86</sup>

The Militia Act, which came into effect on July 1, 1855, was to continue for only three years unless "there should happen to be War between Her Majesty and the United States of America".<sup>87</sup> The appointment of Adjutant General of Militia was accepted by Colonel de Rottenburg on the understanding that he could continue to draw half-pay as a British Army officer as well as 750 pounds annually from the Province of Canada.<sup>88</sup> Its Government left

<sup>86.</sup> Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, 1854-1855, p. 1104.

<sup>87.</sup> 18 Vict. Cap. 77.

<sup>88.</sup> C.O. 42/598, Head to Russell, June 21, 1855.

supervision of militia matters to the Receiver-General, Dr. E.P. Taché, who was a veteran of both the War of 1812 and the Rebellion of 1837. In wartime the sedentary militia would be required to undertake its familiar roles of transporting supplies, building roads and fortifications, and guarding prisoners, but no training for these was necessary in peace time and there was still only to be the traditional annual muster. The new volunteer force, on the other hand, copied the practice of several American states where gaily uniformed units of horse artillery, lancers, hussars and rifles had enjoyed a mushroom growth as the traditional militia fell more and more into disrepute during the years following the War of 1812.<sup>89</sup> The first Canadian units were authorized in a Militia General Order of August 31, 1855; others were promulgated every succeeding week. There was nothing to prevent them drilling more than the number of days for which pay was authorized and, as in Massachusetts and New York, the early units tended to double as social clubs. According to Colonel de Rottenburg's first Annual Report:

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<sup>89</sup>, Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, 1857, Appendix 3.

The persons who have joined this Force are not the dissolute and the idle, but they are, on the contrary, the respectable Mechanics of the several Towns and Villages where the Companies of this Force are located. The idle or the dissolute would never devote the time nor the money which are required to qualify the Men of the Active Force to gain a knowledge of their duties and to provide their Uniforms - and so respectably is this Force constituted, that the By-laws of the several Companies generally contain clauses providing for the expulsion of any Member whose conduct in any way may bring discredit on the Corps they belong to.

... it is of course natural that Gentlemen of the same national origin and the same sentiments, whether Scotch or French, Irish or English, become members of the same Company, Troop or Field Battery. Thus, we have a French Field Battery at Quebec, a French Troop of Cavalry at Montreal, and some French Rifle Companies in Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa, five Highland Companies of Rifles at different places, and some others who are principally if not entirely Irish. 90

The Canadian Government initially purchased enough arms and equipment in England for half the authorized number of volunteers. An arrangement was soon made whereby it could purchase warlike stores from the British Army's own depots in Canada.<sup>91</sup> As an initial gesture of goodwill the British Government donated 29 field guns and sufficient stores for the field batteries, on condition that they be inspected

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90. Ibid.

91. Report on the State of the Militia of the Dominion of Canada for the year 1870, Ottawa, Taylor, 1871, p. 147.

annually by the senior Royal Artillery officer in Canada.<sup>92</sup> Units had to supply their own uniforms, which were patterned on those worn by the British regulars with whom they would be serving and for whom it was hoped the enemy would mistake them.<sup>93</sup>

Indiscreet efforts by British officials in the United States to recruit a foreign legion for service in the Crimean War and American demand for their recall in the spring of 1856 caused a diplomatic furore and some alarm in Canada.<sup>94</sup> The Crimean War being concluded the fiery Lord Palmerston, who was Britain's Prime Minister, decided on strong measures. Lieutenant-General Sir William Eyre was ordered to North America in the revived appointment of Commander of the Forces; the British Army in the Crimea was ordered to provide three infantry regiments and an

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92. Journals of the Legislature Assembly of the Province of Canada, 1857, Appendix 3.

93. Militia General Order, Canada, Aug. 16, 1855. Tunics were to be blue for cavalry and artillery and green for rifles. Units could choose their own head-dress, trousers and facings.

94. J.B. Brebner, "Joseph Howe and the Crimean War Enlistment Controversy between Great Britain and the United States," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XI (December, 1930).

artillery company for Canada and two infantry regiments for Nova Scotia. Ill-informed newspapers, however, magnified this into 10,000 troops who were to be convoyed to North America by the Royal Navy, which was then concentrated at Spithead. This report caused alarm in Washington, but it also brought Lord Elgin to his feet in the House of Lords on April 18, 1856. Lord Elgin believed that there was no serious anti-British feeling in the United States to worry about and he was perturbed that the British Army in North America was to be increased after all the effort he had expended to have it reduced in size.<sup>95</sup> However, the Secretary of State for War merely answered him that the Government intended "to send back to British North America a certain number of regiments, which were taken from the garrisons of those provinces at the commencement of the war ... but the report that these troops are being sent out for the purpose of aggression is entirely without foundation".<sup>96</sup> On May 2, however, the Colonial Secretary wrote Sir Edmund

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95. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, 1856, Vol. CLXII, col. 673. Also see Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, pp. 97-101.

96. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, 1856, Vol. CXLII, cols. 1142-3.

Head that there had been no departure from the policy enunciated by Lord Grey in 1851. The British Government still desired "to place their main dependence on the well-proved loyalty and courage of Her Majesty's Canadian subjects to repel any hostile aggression should the occasion ever unfortunately occur, although in that event Her Majesty's Government would not fail to give to the Province the full support of the whole power of the British Empire".<sup>97</sup> When Lord Elgin asked a further question in the House of Lords on May 27, the Secretary of State for War replied briefly to the effect that no change in policy was intended, but that peace time stations had to be found for the units concerned.<sup>98</sup>

Alarm by the Hudson's Bay Company, because a detachment of American cavalry briefly visited Pembina during the summer of 1856, resulted in 120 officers and men of the Royal Canadian Rifles being sent to Fort Garry in 1857.<sup>99</sup> This company also travelled via Hudson's Bay, but

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97. C.O. 42/604, Labouchere to Head, May 2, 1856.

98. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, 1856, Vol. CXLII, cols. 691-694.

99. C/364, Shepherd to Clarendon, Nov. 4, 1856; Shepherd to Labouchere, March 23, 1857.

by ship from Montreal. Its commander could see no need for regular troops, particularly infantry, at this lonely, isolated post where the inhabitants were peaceful and the nearest U.S. Army Post was Fort Riley, some 400 miles distant with only about 130 officers and enlisted men.<sup>100</sup> The detachment remained at Fort Garry, however, until 1861.

During the spring of 1858 the discovery of gold in the Fraser Valley had drawn fortune hunters from all over the world and made it necessary for the British Government to establish a separate mainland Crown Colony of British Columbia. A company of Royal Engineers was despatched from Britain under the command of Colonel R.C. Moody to ensure that law and order were maintained in the mining camps. Travelling all the way by ship, via Cape Horn, the Royal Engineers reached Vancouver Island in December of that year. Colonel Moody's orders also directed him to survey the new settlements, supervise the construction of roads and bridges and lay out a proper seaport and capital.<sup>101</sup> External defence

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100. C/364, Seton to Officer Commanding, Royal Canadian Rifles, March 14, 1858.

101. Frederick W. Howay, The Work of the Royal Engineers in British Columbia, 1858-1863, Victoria, King's Printer, 1910.

remained the responsibility of Rear-Admiral R.L. Baynes, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Station. He intervened during the summer of 1859, when a detachment of American troops occupied the disputed San Juan Island while the Anglo-American Boundary Commission was still at work, and he had four warships on the scene when Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott appeared, once again in the role of peace-maker. Scott's suggestion of October 25 that token forces of both American infantry and Royal Marines should occupy the island was accepted pending a settlement.<sup>102</sup> Colonel Moody's company of Royal Engineers was ordered back to Great Britain in 1863, but 130 sappers were permitted to take their discharge locally in order to provide much needed artisans for British Columbia.<sup>103</sup>

In Great Britain itself the policy of the Emperor Napoleon III of France had caused growing alarm. Fear that the French were planning to invade across the English Channel, something that the much greater Napoleon I had not been able to do, caused nearly 160,000 members of the British

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102. Lieut.-Colonel M.E.S. Laws, "The San Juan Affair," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, Vol. CV (November, 1960).

103. F.W. Howay, The Work of the Royal Engineers in British Columbia, op. cit.

artisan and middle classes to join a new volunteer movement in 1859.<sup>104</sup> An early summer visit to the defenceless Prince Edward Island by the Commander of the Forces in North America now Lieutenant General Sir William Fenwick Williams, prompted that province's Lieutenant-Governor to seek authority to form volunteer companies.<sup>105</sup> As early as January 30, the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia had proposed the creation of a volunteer force, and a number of companies were functioning there before the end of 1859.<sup>106</sup> Similar action appears to have been taken in New Brunswick because the scheduled visit of the Prince of Wales to North America in 1860 would provide a wonderful opportunity for parades and fetes.<sup>107</sup>

Not only did the Prince of Wales visit each of the separate provinces of British North America in 1860, and inspect both British troops and local volunteers wherever they were to be found, but he made an equally good impression in the American cities which were included in his itinerary.

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104. Brian Bond, "Prelude to the Cardwell Reforms, 1856-68," Journal of the Royal United Service Institution, Vol. CVI (May, 1961), pp. 231-232.

105. C.O. 226/91, Dundas to Newcastle, July 25, 1859.

106. Journal and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Province of Nova Scotia, 1862, Appendix 10.

107. P.A.C., New Brunswick Letter Book, Vol. 1 (1861-1864), Gordon to Newcastle, Dec. 23, 1861.

## CHAPTER VII

## TROUBLED EIGHTFEN-SIXTIES

The outbreak of the American Civil War on April 12, 1861 was viewed as an ill-omen by Sir Edmund Head, who was still Governor-in-Chief of British North America. "The aspect of affairs is most serious," he wrote 12 days later; "whenever their own fighting is over I do not think it will be a pleasant thing to have 100,000 or 200,000 men kicking their heels with arms in their hands on our frontier & all the habits acquired in a Southern Civil War."<sup>1</sup>

As a counter to the future possibility of fillibustering expeditions, the British Government sent three infantry regiments of the line and a battery of field artillery to Canada,<sup>2</sup> to increase its modest garrison to 5,100 regular troops.<sup>3</sup> The Prime Minister, Lord Palmerston, insisted that three further regiments of infantry should be held in readiness for possible despatch;<sup>4</sup> Anglo-American

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1. D.G.G. Kerr, with the scholarly assistance of J.A. Gibson, Sir Edmund Head: A Scholarly Governor, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1954, p. 217.

2. C.O. 42/630, Newcastle to Head, May 31, 1861.

3. W.O. 17/1565, Monthly Strength Return, Canada, Nov. 1, 1861.

4. Colonel Willoughby Verner, assisted by Captain E.D. Parker, The Military Life of H.R.H. George, Duke of Cambridge, London, John Murray, 1905, vol. I, p. 312.

relations were strained because a considerable element in Great Britain was demanding that help should be extended to the Confederate States of America. To the question of whether Canada might be willing to share the additional expense, Sir Edmund Head replied on September 9 that any outbreak of hostilities must be caused by purely Anglo-American differences:

The Colony would have no voice in determining this question and there exist no causes of difference with the Government of the United States arising out of the affairs or interests of Canada. The Colony would be involved in such a war only as part and an exposed part of the Empire....

The feeling of the Colony and its representatives in the Provincial Parliament would I believe be adverse to any contribution in money out of Colonial Funds towards the cost of such increased armament.

That our long exposed frontier is inaccessible by sea and not easily reinforced in winter, is a line of weakness through which an enemy might wound England is the misfortune of Canada as well as the Mother Country, but I doubt whether the people of Canada would see in this fact a sufficient reason for charging them with a large portion of the burden of defence in a war caused by interests in no degree of a local or colonial character.<sup>5</sup>

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5. C.O. 42/630, Head to Newcastle, Sept. 9, 1861.

Major-General C. Hastings Doyle was depressed by conditions in the subordinate Nova Scotia command which he had recently assumed. There were but 2,235 British regulars at his disposal and the only troops in the whole of New Brunswick were 25 artillerymen and 128 infantrymen at Fredericton.<sup>6</sup> Following an inspection trip there he sent a very forthright letter to the Secretary of State for War:

With so few troops at my disposal, I must naturally in case of sudden invasion, look to the Militia of these Provinces for assistance, but we should do so in vain, for altho' it would be numerous, & those composing it loyally disposed, it exists alone on paper, & altho' nominally officered, they are generally speaking too old for service (in some instances from 60 to 90 years of age) entirely unacquainted with their duty, totally ignorant of Drill, & without Adjutants or Staff, so that a considerable period must elapse, with the small means of instruction available, before this mass of men could be formed into working order or properly disciplined, nor can this state of affairs be remedied, as the local legislatures of the provinces have repeatedly refused to provide money for the purpose of Defence generally, altho' in Nova Scotia £2000 was granted to establish Volunteers.<sup>7</sup>

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6. W.O. 17/2408, Monthly Strength Return, Nova Scotia, Nov. 1, 1861.

7. C/1671, Doyle to Secretary of State for War, Nov. 28, 1861.

The Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick had managed to raise 3,000 volunteers who were partially trained. In neither New Brunswick nor Nova Scotia, however, would the Legislature provide money to organize the militia before there was an actual outbreak of hostilities. Beyond organizing a corps of lumbermen to render roads impassable to an invading enemy, Doyle could attempt nothing in the St. John Valley. Elsewhere successful defence would have to depend largely on the efforts of the Royal Navy's North American and West Indian Squadron commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Milne.

The Admiralty possessed little recent knowledge on Canada. Except for 1860, when Vice-Admiral Milne had escorted the Prince of Wales to Quebec and Montreal, only troopships had used the St. Lawrence River in recent years.<sup>8</sup> Captain Richard Collinson, R.N., one of the most efficient officers at the Admiralty and soon to be promoted to flag rank, had once spent a short holiday in Canada, so he was directed to prepare a study. His own recollections could only be reinforced by the reports submitted nearly 20 years

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8. Adm. 128/114, Report by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, March, 1864.

earlier by Captain Edward Boxer, R.N. Collinson's memorandum of September 2 suggested that the presence of British warships at Quebec would make it possible to entrust the citadel to volunteer defenders; the British regulars could then join the principal field force in the vicinity of Montreal. His proposed distribution of the Royal Navy's assistance is interesting:

Off Quebec, two line of battle ships, one-half of the crews to be detailed for service in such vessels as are capable of carrying guns on the Lakes; their crews to be filled up from the fishermen, boat and raft men; and some of their boats to be detached to assist the squadron between Montreal and Quebec in their operations on the rivers St. Francis, Yamaska and Richelieu.

Between Montreal and Quebec two corvettes of not more than 18 feet draft of water; two dispatch vessels; six gunboats of 7 feet draft.

At the head of the Lachine Canal two large-sized gun-boats to annoy the enemy in the event of their attempting to cross from La Prairie.

In the event of the canals not being destroyed, the more vessels that can be passed up to the lakes the better, and the smaller sized floating batteries 44 $\frac{3}{4}$  feet beam will be extremely serviceable. With three of these vessels, one of which should be stationed at Port Dalhousie, a second at Toronto, and a third at Kingston, no enemy dare attempt a landing, as his communication would be certain to be cut off.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Adm. 7/624, "Memorandum on the assistance that can be rendered to the Province of Canada by Her Majesty's Navy in the event of War with the United States," by Captain Richard Collinson, R.N., Sept. 2, 1861.

Obviously Captain Collinson considered that it would not be possible to undertake naval operations on Lakes Erie and Huron, for he emphasized the importance of preventing the Americans from seizing the Welland Canal and thus transferring naval vessels to Lake Ontario.

There were a few complaints that American officers in uniform were operating recruiting offices on Canadian soil,<sup>10</sup> or otherwise trying to lure British soldiers into their units,<sup>11</sup> and instances of Canadian soil being violated by American soldiers seeking deserters.<sup>12</sup> Yet the situation in North America remained quiet until news reached Quebec that U.S.S. San Jacinto had stopped the British mail steamship Trent on the high seas on November 8, 1861, and forcibly removed two Confederate diplomatic agents on their way to Europe. The Governor-General, now Lord Monck, ordered the Lieutenant-General Commanding in North America, Sir William Fenwick Williams, to place his regular troops on a war footing and arrange accommodation for the

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10. C/696, Booker to Head, Oct. 21, 1861.

11. C/696-699 contains correspondence on what was known as crimping.

12. Robin W. Winks, Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1960, p. 200.

reinforcements certain to be sent from Great Britain. The Canadian Government agreed to the Governor General's request that the number of its volunteers be increased; applications to form new companies were pouring in and existing volunteer units found all their members once again drilling with enthusiasm. Large numbers of the sedentary militia also turned out to drill at this time of crisis, and the Canadian Government agreed to embody 38,000 if it should be necessary. At long last a Minister of Militia was designated, with the appointment going to John A. Macdonald who already was Attorney General for Canada West and joint leader of the Government.<sup>13</sup>

Lieutenant-General Williams paid a whirlwind visit to the most vulnerable points in Upper Canada. Additional guns were mounted at Kingston and Toronto, where Mr. F.H. Killaly joined his party. Mr. Killaly, a former Public Works official and now Inspector of Railways for the Province of Canada, knew the whole country well and was considered to have a "strong, clear practical head".<sup>14</sup> The provincial authorities agreed to build batteries at Port Dalhousie and

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13. C.O. 42/628, Monck to Newcastle, Dec. 19 and 27, 1861.

14. Adm. 7/624, De Winton to Collinson, Jan. 1, 1862.

Port Colborne, and to erect 12 blockhouses at locks along the Welland Canal. Remoteness from Quebec would make it necessary to establish a stores depot at Ottawa. Fort Wellington at Prescott was re-occupied and strengthened, as a connecting link between Kingston and Montreal. Moreover, the American town of Ogdensburg on the opposite shore of the St. Lawrence River was now the terminus of two railway lines. Plans were made to stop any American advance on Montreal, or even to secure the initiative by capturing the American fort at Rouse's Point. Finally, the whole province was divided into five military districts for the British Army, with headquarters at London, Toronto, Kingston, Montreal and Quebec. Captain F.W. de Winton, R.A., who accompanied Sir William Fenwick Williams, subsequently wrote privately to Captain Collinson, R.N. that he hoped the Admiralty would provide war vessels for service on the Great Lakes. "You know the impossibility of defending the frontier without some command of that kind," his letter continued, "and could we obtain possession of Lake Erie by establishing a post on its southern shore, you might cut off the north and west by communicating with the Southern Army, whose posts are not more than 100 miles from it."<sup>15</sup>

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15. Ibid.

The Admiralty did not bother to tell the Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West Indian Squadron what action should be taken on the inland waters of Canada, following the re-opening of navigation in the spring of 1862, or even what action he should take in the North Atlantic if hostilities began. Vice-Admiral Milne had, however, his own ideas respecting the latter. Milne later wrote that, after ensuring the safety of his own bases at Halifax and Bermuda, he would have raised the United States Navy's blockade of the Confederate coastline, using his own squadron and that of Commodore Hugh Dunlop, R.N., who was observing the course of a revolution in Mexico in case French or Spanish forces might try to intervene. Then Milne would have blockaded the coast of the northern United States to the best of his ability and co-operated in Chesapeake Bay with the Confederate land forces "who would practically, if not in terms, have been our allies, and where our aid would have been invaluable".<sup>16</sup>

The staffs of both the Horse Guards and the War Office had been very busy preparing the despatch of 11,175 regular troops to North America: two battalions of Foot

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16. Adm. 128/114, Report by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, March, 1864.

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Guards, six infantry battalions of the line, 12 batteries of artillery, three companies of engineers, two battalions of the military train and sizable detachments of commissariat and medical staff. Envisaged disposition of the augmented garrisons was:

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks</u>
Canada	611	12,341
New Brunswick	154	2,282
Nova Scotia	147	2,738
Newfoundland	<u>12</u>	<u>297</u>
	924	17,658 17

The delegation of Canadian ministers then in London to press for British financial aid in the construction of an Intercolonial Railway expressed doubt in the command ability of Lieutenant-General Sir William Fenwick Williams, although conceding that the "hero of Kars" was immensely popular in the province.<sup>18</sup> One of the additional staff officers being posted to Canada would later describe Williams as "a very handsome old gentleman, with charming manners."<sup>19</sup> What more senior officer was available to supersede him, however, was something the youthful General Commanding-in-Chief, H.R.H.

17. C/1671, Strength states published by War Office, Jan. 3, 1862.

18. W. Verner, Military Life of H.R.H. George, Duke of Cambridge, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 314.

19. Field-Marshal Viscount Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, London, Constable, 1903, Vol. II, p. 111.

George, Duke of Cambridge, decided to postpone until later. Lieutenant-General Sir George Wetherall, who had been called to the Horse Guards for consultation because of his long and varied service in Canada, was a good 12 years older than Williams.

Considerable quantities of arms, ammunition and accoutrements were shipped from Woolwich Arsenal for possible issue to the Canadian militia, and particularly to its volunteer units of cavalry, artillery and infantry. Colonel Daniel Lysons, who had served in Canada during the Rebellions and in the Crimea, and had been intimately involved with the volunteer movement which swept Great Britain in 1859, was despatched to advise the Canadian Government which had done without an Adjutant General of Militia for reasons of economy since Colonel de Rottenburg's resignation in 1858.<sup>20</sup> Colonel Lysons was accompanied by 12 field officers and 46 sergeants to instruct the Canadian volunteers. Smaller instructional cadres were sent to train the volunteers of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, but not those of Prince Edward Island.<sup>21</sup>

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20. C.O. 42/630, Newcastle to Monck, Dec. 4, 1861.

21. C/696, Forster to Williams, Dec. 12, 16 and 26, 1861; C/1037, Scarlett to Williams, Dec. 17, 1861.

The first troopships attempted the St. Lawrence River, because it had been a mild and open season for navigation, but only S.S. Persia was able to get as far as Bié on December 26, and land its troops who were transported in sleighs by the local inhabitants to the eastern terminus of the Grand Trunk Railway at Rivière-du-Loup. Since the only railway linking Montreal with the Atlantic Coast had its terminus at Portland, Maine, preparations were in hand to land the remaining troops in New Brunswick and move them by sleigh over the previously used winter route to Rivière-du-Loup.<sup>22</sup> Responsibility for this movement rested with Major-General Doyle at Halifax. Captain William Fitzroy of the 63rd Regiment, who had been sent from Halifax to headquarters at Montreal with despatches for Sir William Fenwick Williams, in civilian clothes via Portland and that branch of the Grand Trunk Railway, made a detailed reconnaissance on his return trip overland. Major-General R. Rumley was sent to New Brunswick with an ad hoc staff to arrange overnight accomodation and supervise the actual troop movement. Serious thought was given to the erection of stockaded blockhouses at intervals along the Madawaska-Temisouata portion of the route which ran close to the border

22. J. Mackay Hitsman, "Winter Troop Movement to Canada, 1862", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XLIII (June, 1962).

with Maine. Such strong points would be occupied by detachments of troops during the passage of the rest of the force. The most likely points from which attack might come were Fort Fairfield on the Aroostook River and Houlton, which was opposite to the New Brunswick town of Woodstock. Major-General Rumley was also responsible for opening up an alternative and militarily more safe route from Shediac to Métis. This partially-built road, passing through the Matapedia Valley, was much the same route as would be followed later by the Intercolonial Railway.

By the time troopships began straggling into Halifax on December 26, however, the crisis was being resolved peaceably. Queen Victoria's dying Prince Consort had managed to tone down Lord Palmerston's ultimatum and the British Government then authorized its Minister in Washington to delay official delivery so that President Lincoln's administration would not be called on to make a hasty decision. At an American cabinet meeting on December 26, Secretary of State William H. Seward persuaded the President to release the Confederate diplomatic agents to a

British ship at Baltimore. The British Government then conveniently overlooked American failure to apologize for stopping Trent on the high seas.<sup>23</sup>

It was decided to continue with the overland troop movement to Canada, since another crisis might develop. Plans to build blockhouses along the way were abandoned, however, as was the opening of the alternate route from Shediac to Métis. On December 30, 1861, the 62nd Regiment of Foot, which had been stationed in Nova Scotia for some time, was sent forward by shallow draft steamer to St. Andrews, New Brunswick. Two days later the first party of three officers and 150 other ranks travelled by rail as far as Canterbury where this line ended. Here hired sleighs were waiting to take them to Woodstock. According to Lieutenant-Colonel James Daubeny's report, he made an excuse to visit Houlton:

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23. H.C. Allen, Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952), London, Odhams, 1954, pp. 470-471.

... which place the 62nd Regt. were to have taken in case of war with America. The Town consists of scattered houses extended over more than a mile in length & lying at the bottom of a hill. The only garrison in the place were 60 Volunteers, whom I saw marching in the Town without arms to the inspiring air of Yankee Doodle played on a solitary fife accompanied by a big drum, so that the 62nd would not have had a hard task to perform.<sup>24</sup>

The larger steamships docked at Saint John, from where 160 soldiers went forward daily riding eight to a sleigh.<sup>25</sup> Four days travelling took them to Woodstock, where they merged with the smaller parties that had travelled part way by rail. Another six days travelling took everyone to Rivière-du-Loup, where accomodation was available until a train should leave for Montreal. A few staff officers had travelled from Halifax in civilian clothes via ship to Boston and then by an American railway in order to get to Montreal before the troops. The final return submitted by Major-General Doyle on March 17, 1862 showed that 6,823 all ranks actually went forward by sleigh to Canada. Only nine

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24. C.O. 42/632, "Journal of Lieut. Col. Daubeny, C.B., 62 Regt. from 20th December 1861 to 18th January 1862".

25. J.M. Hitsman, "Winter Troop Movement to Canada, 1862", op. cit.

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men succeeded in deserting from halting places close to the Maine boundary - in response to offers of a substantial bounty for trained soldiers who would serve in the American army and despite the precautions taken. The remaining troops, together with the military stores, were held at Halifax until spring when ships could again navigate the St. Lawrence River.

The regular troops assigned to Upper Canada were concentrated at Kingston, Toronto, Hamilton, Guelph and London, from where they might launch counter-attacks against any attempted invasion. In consequence, Sir William Fenwick Williams resisted all pleas for regular garrisons from Lake Erie and Lake Ontario towns, whose worried mayors were afraid of them being attacked.<sup>26</sup> The greatest number of the troops in Canada, as always, were in the Montreal area. A number of officers subsequently obtained leave to visit the opposing American armies as military observers.

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26. J. Mackay Hitsman, "Please send us a Garrison" Ontario History, Vol. L (Autumn, 1958) and additional correspondence on C/696.

The Canadian volunteers had increased to 829 officers and 13,390 other ranks, and were organized in 34 troops of cavalry, 27 batteries of artillery, 182 companies of rifles and five companies of engineers.<sup>27</sup> On March 15, 1862 a Parliamentary Commission appointed by the Governor General to plan a more effective militia submitted its Report. It recommended the establishment of an Active Force of 50,000 volunteers and a Reserve Force of the same size. The former, consisting of all the existing volunteers and a residual number selected by ballot from the sedentary militia, should be liable for anywhere from 14 to 28 days annual drill. "A reference to the map of Canada will," the Report continued, "clearly point out that even this number of men would be insufficient without the co-operation of a strong body of regular troops and a powerful fleet of gunboats on the lakes."<sup>28</sup>

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27. Sessional Paper No. 17, Province of Canada, 1862, p. 3.

28. Ibid., p. 8.

By this time, however, most Canadians had again lost interest in military matters. "Make the militia efficient," the Toronto Globe had urged three days earlier, "Drill and arm the volunteers, and let the business of the country go on. We are not afraid of the Americans provoking a war; we are not afraid of them if they do provoke it." Since the United States was making no headway in its war with the Confederate States of America, it would have been pointless to argue on this score. The Militia Bill and the Government seemed doomed from the outset. The Government headed by John A. Macdonald and Georges-Etienne Cartier had grown corrupt during its tenure of office and there was a widespread feeling that a change was needed. While opposition mounted on a variety of counts, Macdonald absented himself from the debate to engage in one of his well known drinking bouts. When he did resume his seat on May 20, in time for the Bill's second reading, it was defeated by a vote of 61 to 54. Next day the Government resigned.<sup>29</sup> The incoming Ministry headed by John Sandfield Macdonald and Louis V. Sicotte managed to secure a Militia Act which merely doubled the number of days of paid annual drill for

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29. C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army, pp. 132-135.

volunteers from six to twelve for a maximum of 10,000 volunteers and permitted the Governor General to raise volunteer regiments independently of the militia in wartime.<sup>30</sup>

London newspapers were very outspoken in their criticism of the Canadian Legislature. The Times declared on June 6 that "if Canada will not fight to protect its independence from foreign invasion, neither will England". This, of course, brought a typically Canadian retort from the Toronto Globe in its issue of June 18:

The Times has done more than its share in creating bad feeling between England and the United States and would have liked to see the Canadians take up the quarrel which it has raised.... There would be no talk of war but for the mischief-making of newspapers in England and America.... We cannot agree to the dogma that Canada should provide entirely for her defence when she is not the author of the quarrels against the consequences of which she is called to stand upon her guard.

The British Government was much more circumspect. Permanent officials of both the Colonial Office and the War

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30. 25 Vict. Cap. 1.

Office were well aware of how small was public expenditure for all purposes in the self-gov-ning colonies. Only a few weeks before a request for preferential treatment for the volunteers of Prince Edward Island, made by its Lieutenant-Governor who considered that most corps were too poor to supply the extras not provided through public funds, had evoked the following minute:

The burthen of this song is the same that reaches us from so many quarters in North America. The Inhabitants say that they are willing to give their personal services, but not to spend local funds either private or public. The Governor therefore hopes that arms and accoutrements may be furnished free, and Even a small quantity of ammunition.

This is an embarrassing subject. A genuine volunteer movement is valuable, but if the greater share of the pecuniary part is to be borne by Great Britain, it can no longer be viewed as a local effort or as a proof of local public spirit. On the other hand a decline of the volunteers will be a loss. 31

The Colonial Secretary's lengthy despatch of August 21 to Lord Monck expressed the British Government's concern over Canada's lack of defensive measures, when the United States had a really large army for the first time in its history. The Duke of Newcastle suggested that 50,000 partially-trained militia were a necessary adjunct to the British

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31. C.O. 226/96, Dundas to Newcastle, April 24, 1862.

regulars and Canadian volunteers. Lord Monck was directed to investigate the possibility of creating a uniform militia system, which might be entered into willingly by all the provinces. Moreover, the despatch continued:

The political union of the North American Colonies has often been discussed. The merits of that measure and the difficulties in the way of its accomplishment have been well considered, but none of the objections which oppose it seem to impede a union for defence. This matter is one which all the Colonies have interests common with each other and identical with the policy of England.<sup>32</sup>

By this time a commission of experts had completed their survey of the Canadian border from Lake Superior to New Brunswick and were completing their report, which was submitted to Lord Monck on September 2. As early as February 6, Lord Monck had appointed Colonel J.W. Gordon, R.E., Lieutenant-Colonel H.L. Gardiner, R.A., Mr. H.H. Killaly and Captain W. Crossman, R.E., to report on a system of fortification and defence for Canada. On March 31 Colonel E.R. Wetherall, Chief of Staff to Sir William Fenwick Williams, and Captain John Bythesea, V.C., R.N.,

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<sup>32</sup>. Sessional Paper No. 15, Province of Canada, 1863, includes a copy of Newcastle to Monck, Aug. 21, 1862.

were added to the Commission, because of detailed instructions received from the Secretary of State for War.<sup>33</sup> These had been written by the Inspector General of Fortifications, General Sir John Fox Burgoyne, who did not share the popular belief that Canada might be invaded in winter when the St. Lawrence River was frozen over:

Winter campaigning is attended with the most severe hardships and sufferings, and with the greatest tendency to a rapid disorganization of troops; and this is felt in a far greater degree by the advancing army than by those troops who act on the defensive. It may, however, give rise to predatory excursions, which will be opposed by flying columns organized distinctly for the purpose.<sup>34</sup>

He virtually ruled out an attack on Quebec, as being too difficult for Americans to attempt with their resources. Burgoyne admitted that he lacked any practical first hand knowledge of the Canadian border, but he felt that "some favourable battlefields could be selected on that line; these, previously thoroughly well studied, could no doubt be rapidly entrenched, and made very formidable."

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33. Captain Bythesea was specially despatched from England.

34. P.A.C., "Report of the Commissioners appointed to consider the Defences of Canada, 1862".

The lengthy Report submitted to Lord Monck on September 2 was based on the premise that the United States was now a "military power". It had demonstrated its ability to raise and equip large armies in a short space of time, and to bring them to bear on "any part of their enemy's frontier that may be necessary".<sup>35</sup> Recent operations in the Mississippi Valley had shown that the Americans "also possess the power of rapidly extemporizing a formidable fleet, adapted for lake warfare". The Report envisaged American attack:

By a naval descent on the shores of Lake Huron, at Goderich or Collingwood.

By the passage of a force across the Detroit River into the London District.

By the passage of a force across the Niagara frontier.

By the passage of troops across the St. Lawrence from Ogdensburgh.

By several columns acting in concert between Derby Line and Huntington, with a view of converging on Montreal and cutting the communication with Kingston, as well as with Quebec.

By threatening each of these five areas, an enemy could force a dispersal of the defending troops along the whole

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35. Ibid.

frontier for fear that feints might be turned into real attacks. Undoubtedly the main offensive would be directed against Montreal, and this would be facilitated by the enemy being able to turn the line of the Richelieu River from his fortified base at Rouse's Point.

The Commissioners conceded that defending troops would have to be distributed to a certain extent, but argued that they should be concentrated on specific strategical points. From these they could be thrown in masses upon the enemy, or await the development of his plans. Permanent fortifications existed only at Quebec and Kingston; temporary works elsewhere had been allowed to decay, so new strong points would have to be constructed. Financial considerations caused the Commissioners to recommend only those fortifications that were "absolutely required", but these were considerable and of varying strength. Permanent works were recommended for Sarnia, Amherstburg, Guelph, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Fort Dalhousie, Fort Mississauga, Short Hills, Hamilton, Toronto, Bay of Quinte, Prescott, Montreal, St. Johns, Isle-aux-Noix, and Lévis, at an estimated cost of 1,611,000 pounds sterling. The construction of many more entrenched positions, in which troops could offer

battle, was recommended. Otherwise the numerically smaller defending forces would not stand a chance of success. Success would also depend upon naval supremacy on the Great Lakes being acquired immediately on the outbreak of war. The Commissioners now became very frank:

They are aware that by existing treaties no fleets can be maintained on the lakes in time of peace, but they recommend, as soon as the canal communications shall have been improved, as hereafter proposed, that iron-plated vessels with all the armament and stores necessary, should be kept in readiness at Ottawa, or other convenient place not affected by the stipulations of the treaty, whence they could be taken into Lakes Ontario and Erie.

During the progress of any negotiations likely to end in war, these vessels without any breach of treaty or faith, could assemble at Gananoqui, below Kingston, for the purpose of passing into the lakes immediately war was proclaimed.

A portion of the St. Lawrence canals not being available after the actual commencement of hostilities, the enlargement of the Ottawa, Rideau and Welland Canals, to an extent that will enable armoured vessels to pass through them, becomes an essential requirement in the defence of Canada.

Your Commissioners have been informed that no definite dimensions for this class of vessel, adapted for warfare on the lakes, has yet been determined on by the Admiralty, and are consequently unable to state size the locks should be made.

Shore headquarters for a naval force of two battleships, two corvettes, nine floating batteries, six despatch vessels and 53 gunboats should be established at Montreal. The naval base for Lake Ontario should be in the Bay of Quinte, rather than the more exposed harbour of Kingston. Dunnville on the Grand River was the most suitable location for a naval base on Lake Erie. Unless and until a canal should be constructed to make it unnecessary to use the narrow Detroit River to get to Lake Huron, there would be no point re-establishing a base at Penetanguishene.

Manpower requirements were placed even higher than the 100,000 mentioned earlier by the Provincial Parliament's Commission: 65,000 effectives of whom only a large nucleus should be British regulars, 65,000 in reserve and 20,000 to replace casualties. Disposition of the effectives was envisaged as being 15,000 in the London district, 17,000 at Toronto and Niagara, 10,000 at Kingston, 5,000 at Prescott, 15,000 in the Montreal area, and 3,000 at Quebec. Naval requirements were estimated as 9,350 officers and ratings. "The necessity of having a secure base of operations in communication with the Mother Country," it was emphasized,

"renders the maintenance of the fortress of Quebec indispensable."<sup>36</sup> The Commissioners also recommended the construction of an Intercolonial Railway, along the "North Shore" route (much as eventually built), to ensure communication with the fortress of Halifax during the months when the St. Lawrence River was filled with ice.

The Canadian Government had conveniently put off consideration of Lord Newcastle's despatch of August 21, 1862. Finally, on October 28 and after prodding by the Governor General, it decided against establishing compulsory military training for the militia. The Government felt that the Volunteer Movement was the outlet through which "the military spirit of the people must find vent in a period of peace".<sup>37</sup> The countryside was too sparsely populated for farmers to have to abandon their labour in order to drill at a distance from their farms. In the event of war, able-bodied men everywhere could be depended on, but it was "not desirable

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36. Ibid.

37. Sessional Paper No. 15, Province of Canada, 1863, contains copy of Executive Council Minute, Oct. 28, 1862.

to excite discontent amongst them, by any premature attempts to exact compulsory service'. Canadians would never do anything to provoke war with the United States. Furthermore:

No probable combination of regular troops and militia would preserve our soil from invading armies; and no fortune which the most sanguine dare hope for would prevent our most flourishing districts from becoming the battlefield of the war. Our trade would be brought to a standstill; our villages destroyed, homes, happy in peace, would be rendered miserable by war, and all as a result of events for the production of which Canada would be in no way accountable.<sup>38</sup>

Union of all the provinces, even for defence, was not feasible until there should be an Intercolonial Railway - an opinion that was subsequently confirmed by the Lieutenant-Governors of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and by the Governor General himself.<sup>39</sup>

On December 17 Lord Monck tried again, urging the necessity of creating the substantial part-time force that had been recommended.<sup>40</sup> Again, however, the Canadian

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38. Ibid.

39. Ibid., Monck to Newcastle, Oct. 30, 1862

40. Ibid., Monck to Macdonald, Dec. 17, 1862.

Government's answer was in the negative. It was equally impervious to a further appeal by the Colonial Secretary. This attempted to refute the stand taken by the Canadian Government on October 28, and argued that "the main security against aggression which Canada enjoys as a portion of the British Empire is the fact known to all the world that war with Canada means war with England; not in Canada only, but upon every sea and upon the shores, where situated, of the aggressive power itself".<sup>41</sup>

As a follow-up to the Royal Commission which had reported on the defences of Great Britain itself on February 7, 1860, the Secretary of State for War had appointed a committee to report on colonial defences generally. This Defence Committee was instructed to recommend which existing fortifications should be placed in an efficient state, and which should be either dismantled or turned over to local authorities. Although the Committee's report, which was submitted on January 8, 1863, was based largely on views submitted by Royal Engineer officers employed in the several colonies rather than an extended trip throughout the British Empire, part of it is worth quoting here:

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41. Ibid., Newcastle to Monck, Dec. 20, 1862.

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Since Quebec is the place through which all succours from Great Britain to Canada must pass, it is obviously necessary that this fortress should be maintained in the most efficient and secure condition. If it fell into the hands of an enemy, the military communication between the province and the mother country would be cut off. The Committee are therefore of opinion that Quebec should be kept up as a first class fortress, but with such modification of the old line of works around the town as may be found necessary.

The Committee abstain from making any remark on other positions of importance in Canada, as a Commission is now inquiring on the spot into the general subject of the defence of the province.

Halifax, in Nova Scotia, is an important naval and military station, the maintenance of which is required for national objects. The Citadel appears to be in a fair state of repair, but the works on George's Island require to be remodelled and re-armed, to meet the modern improvements in gunnery. The works called Grand Battery, Fort Charlotte [on George's Island], Fort Clarence and Point Pleasant should, owing to their position, be retained; but require to be remodelled. York Redoubt and Sherbrooke Tower appear to be useless as they now stand; they should either be remodelled, or else abandoned and replaced by floating harbour defences. Fort Needham may be dismantled.

The works at Windsor and at Annapolis, in Nova Scotia, may be abandoned.

The harbour of St. John's, in New Brunswick, is a position of importance, both on account of the direct access it affords to Quebec and Canada, through the province of New Brunswick, and also on account of its commanding the Bay of Fundy, - of which the possession by an enemy would threaten the province of Nova Scotia, and one main line of communication with Canada. Some of the existing works require to be remodelled and re-armed; while Partridge Island calls for special attention as a point essential to the defence of the harbour.

The works at St. Andrew's, in New Brunswick, are reported to be in a very delapidated state. Considering their immediate proximity to the frontier, the Committee do not think it necessary that they should be renewed, but recommend their abandonment.

At Sydney, Cape Breton, the works are in a ruinous state; but considering the value of the coal mines in time of war to the operations of the navy, it is desirable that they should have some suitable defence.

At Newfoundland it is considered unnecessary to have any permanent works beyond a few coast batteries for the defence of St. John's Harbour.<sup>42</sup>

A considerably more critical view was expressed in the letter which Major-General Hastings Doyle penned on January 22, 1863, a mere three weeks later. Doyle considered that in its present state Halifax would be "defenceless" in the face of a powerful enemy fleet and wrote that Saint John was "absolutely defenceless in every way, either against organized attack or predatory incursions".<sup>43</sup> No one bothered to mention Prince Edward Island, because it no longer had either fortifications or a British garrison.

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42. P.R.O., 30/48, Cardwell Papers, Box 6/40, Report of Defence Committee, Jan. 8, 1863.

43. W.O. 55/1558 (8), Doyle to Military Secretary, Jan. 22, 1863.

The British Government became convinced following the Confederate loss of Vicksburg and defeat at Gettysburg, both of which occurred in July, 1863, that the United States would win its Civil War. It would then have armies available to attack British North America. "Even if they were disbanded or much reduced," Lieutenant-Colonel W.F.D. Jervois, R.F. would report to the Secretary of State for War on March 24, 1864, "the knowledge and experience of military operations obtained both by officers and men during the civil war would still remain as elements greatly contributing to the warlike power of the American people."<sup>44</sup> At least some of the defeated Confederates would be willing to serve against a foreign foe and there were many Northerners who thought that a foreign war would be the best way to smooth over the problem of reconstruction. Jervois had served as secretary of the Royal Commission on the Defences of Great Britain; now Deputy-Director of Fortification, he was the obvious officer to make a new study of the defence of British North America. The work done by Colonel Gordon and his associates in 1862 had been thorough, but their report had recommended

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44. Lieut.-Colonel W.F.D. Jervois, Report on the Defence of Canada and of the British Naval Stations in the Atlantic. Part I. Defence of Canada, London, War Office, 1864.

such large military and naval expenditure that the British Government hesitated about implementing any part of it. On September 13, 1863 Jervois landed at Halifax, where he spent a week; he was in Saint John for four days, in Canada for three-four weeks, in the north-eastern United States for three weeks, and at Bermuda for one week.

Jervois' Report was based on the premise that 'no distinct system of defence' had ever been proposed to the Canadian people for adoption and that they would do their share if the right approach was made.<sup>45</sup> The militia legislation recently enacted by the Canadian Parliament had increased the authorized number of volunteers to 35,000 all ranks and provided for a careful enrolment of the sedentary militia in 1864.<sup>46</sup> Battalions of sedentary militia might then be embodied by ballot for six days' annual drill; their officers would be qualified at military schools to be operated by British regiments in garrison at Quebec and Toronto. There were then 11,130 British troops actually serving in Canada: 1,857 at Quebec; 4,118 at Montreal; 1,081 at Kingston; 1,153 at Toronto; 946 at Hamilton; 1,292 at London; 683 elsewhere in small detachments. There were 23,580 volunteers in Upper Canada and 12,540 in Lower

45. Ibid.

46. 27 Vict. Caps. 2 and 3.

Canada. These defenders were too weak to meet the Americans in the open field on the outbreak of war, but they should be able to hold a few vital strong points until help could arrive from overseas. But there would be no point trying to defend as many fortresses and field works as Colonel Gordon's Commission had recommended, since vastly superior enemy armies would merely leave forces to invest each and move on.<sup>47</sup>

There was no doubt that any main American effort would be directed against Montreal and Jervois foresaw up to 100,000 Americans advancing from Rouse's Point across the imaginary boundary of the 45th parallel. An American army corps might cross the St. Lawrence from Ogdensburg to Prescott and proceed down river towards Montreal, and there might be diversionary attacks along the Niagara and Detroit frontiers for the purpose of drawing British forces inland. The ultimate American objective would be the capture of Quebec City, but Jervois felt that this would be difficult to achieve:

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47. W.F.D. Jervois, Report on the Defence of Canada, 1864, op. cit.

Owing...to its distance from the enemy's resources, and to the nature of the country through which an advance upon it must be conducted, an operation against Quebec is one of infinitely greater difficulty than against Montreal. One plan that has been discussed by the Americans is to collect their forces on the head waters of the Kennebec and Penobscot rivers, and then advance upon Quebec through the valley of the Chaudière, a distance of some 250 miles, along a route but little travelled, and passing through an almost uninhabited wilderness. It does not appear likely that this plan would be adopted. The most probable line of operations upon Quebec, if the attack were made simultaneously with that upon Montreal, is by the Grand Trunk Railway from Portland. In this case the plan of the enemy would be to seize Richmond, to which he might also communicate from Lake Champlain, and from whence the railway diverges both to Montreal and Quebec. From Richmond he would therefore equally menace both these places.<sup>48</sup>

Jervois thought that Quebec could be defended until help arrived from overseas, if the existing fortifications were strengthened and a line of earthworks was constructed south of Lévis to keep the enemy beyond artillery range of Quebec City itself. He did not believe, however, that anything could be done to prevent the Americans achieving naval supremacy on the upper Great Lakes and recommended damaging the Welland Canal so they could not use it. Only by enlarging the canals on the Ottawa River and Rideau waterway would it be possible to maintain a force of armour-

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48. Ibid.

plated war vessels on Lake Ontario. These would have to operate as far down the St. Lawrence River as Prescott in order to prevent an American invasion from Ogdensburg. Even the Grand Trunk Railway, which stretched from Montreal to Windsor, ran too close to the border for troops and stores to be moved along it safely. In short, it would not be possible to defend the western part of the Province of Canada. Therefore Jervois made the following recommendation:

... before the actual commencement of hostilities, the whole of the Queen's troops should be brought into Lower Canada... excepting perhaps 1,000 men for garrison and other duties, they should in the first instance be concentrated at or near Montreal. In like manner, as regards the volunteers, the best course would be for the Governor General to exercise the power vested in him by the Volunteer Militia Act, and to bring the whole of this force to join the main body near Montreal.

Objections would, of course, be raised to the Western districts being thus left in the possession of the enemy, but we should gain strength by this system of concentration; whereas the enemy, if he thought it worth while to make an attack upon this part of the country, would be expending considerable resources upon operations which would not lead to the attainment of his object. He would gain no real military advantage by the occupation of the western peninsula, and it would be bad policy on his part to overrun the country if no such advantage could be obtained. If the Americans, as no doubt they do, desire the conquest of Canada, they would wish to conciliate the country, and if the Canadians are loyal now, the presence of hostile armies amongst them would make them more attached to the mother country than before. The great object of an American invasion would be the expulsion of the British power from the country.

But even by concentrating the whole of the Queen's troops and the volunteers in the eastern districts, we could scarcely calculate in the first instance on more than about 10,000 regulars, and from 25,000 to 30,000 volunteers, for the defence of Lower Canada; that is, unless reinforcements were supplied from England before the actual outbreak of hostilities.

The enemy, on the other hand, would probably make his attack with some 100,000 men, and whatever might be the amount of our reinforcements from home, the disparity would be so great that we could not oppose him in the field with any prospect of success, and in the absence of any defensive works to enable our small force to resist one so superior in numbers, we could not prevent his occupying Montreal; the only alternative would be for our force to fall back upon Quebec.

If Quebec, then, were put into a state of siege, we might hold out there; with this view it has been proposed on previous occasions, when the question of the defence of Canada has been under consideration, to strengthen the fortifications of Quebec only, without doing anything of a similar nature for the protection of Montreal.<sup>49</sup>

Jervois, however, thought it would be unwise to abandon Montreal at the outset: fighting could take place only during the summer months when British ironclads could prevent the enemy crossing the St. Lawrence and could harass their movement along the south shore, so why needlessly discourage the local volunteers and sedentary militia, and make necessary its recapture later by the expeditionary

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49. Ibid.

force sent from Great Britain. Instead he recommended construction of a line of defensive works well south of Montreal. The increased defences he recommended for Quebec and Montreal, together with their armament, would cost 750,000 pounds sterling, but this was less than the cost of maintaining the existing British troops in Canada for a single year.

The British Government which studied Lieutenant-Colonel Jervois' Report during the spring of 1864 was faced with a nasty situation in Europe. After Prussia and Austria wantonly attacked tiny Denmark over the question of Schleswig-Holstein on February 1, the still bellicose Lord Palmerston announced that aggressors would find that "it will not be Denmark alone with whom they will have to contend."<sup>50</sup> Only one-third of the British Army's infantry battalions were serving at home, however, and these were under strength, so Great Britain was unable to prevent the balance of power being upset in Europe.

Overall reform of the British Army's organization would take time, but something could be achieved immediately by reducing the size of the commitment in Canada and

50. C.P. Stacey, "Britain's Withdrawal from British North America, 1846-1871," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XXXVI (September, 1955), p. 187.

concentrating the bulk of the continuing regular troops in Lower Canada as Lieutenant-Colonel Jervis had suggested. The two battalions of Foot Guards and the Military Train were ordered back to Britain and Lieutenant-General Sir William Fenwick Williams was advised, in a letter dated May 25, 1864, that it was "highly desirable to retain the Troops in Canada in two principal masses at Quebec & Montreal, & to diminish as far as possible the number of scattered stations in that Colony, other than the small posts occupied by the R.C. Rifles for the purpose of checking desertion".<sup>51</sup> Not knowing of this letter, Charles Adderley, a long-time critic of British expenditures on colonial defence, introduced a motion into the House of Commons to the effect that the continuing 9,000 British troops in Canada should not be scattered in detachments along an indefensible border. His motion was debated on June 27, while the House of Lords was discussing the Austro-Prussian defeat of tiny Denmark. Adderley admitted that it "might be desirable" to have a few British troops stationed in Canada as a nucleus for its defence, but asserted that these should be concentrated at Quebec. Unfortunately, he added, Quebec was virtually

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51. G.20/11316, Lugard to Williams, May 25, 1864.

defenceless. Lord Robert Cecil (afterwards Lord Salisbury and a Prime Minister of Great Britain) suggested that it would be a national disgrace if a body of British troops stationed farther inland was cut off and forced to surrender.<sup>52</sup> The Times seized on this point and editorialized that 9,000 British troops might serve only as a lure to large American armies interested in another victorious campaign once they had disposed of the Confederate States of America.<sup>53</sup> The debate was settled by the newly appointed Secretary of State for the Colonies, Edward Cardwell, who quoted the orders that had been sent to the Lieutenant-General Commanding in North America.<sup>54</sup>

Lieutenant-General Sir William Fenwick Williams had successfully opposed such a policy earlier, but he now raised no objection beyond suggesting that Fort Henry at Kingston should be either retained or dismantled. His letter of June

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52. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, Vol. CLXXVI, cols. 374-377.

53. The Times, London, June 29, 1864.

54. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, Vol. CLXXVI, cols. 378-381.

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13 to the Secretary of State for War indicated personal disillusionment that Canadians had put forth no real effort in their own defence. In his opinion:

... they seem to look on their coming dangers with the eye of a child, under the protection of a Parent who is bound to fight, whilst they pursue their ordinary business, or agitate themselves by fruitless party politics and parliamentary conflicts. Yet Upper Canada will witness the withdrawal of the Queen's Troops with regret and mortification, mingled with a bitter reflection that they have made so little effort towards self defence, or in responding to the urgent, earnest, and unceasing calls of their Governor General! I only trust it may lead them to reflect and seriously to set about the organization of a Militia, for certes, a few Volunteers never can or will defend Canada.<sup>55</sup>

The Governor General, however, expressed his opposition to the new policy in no uncertain terms. His confidential letter of June 16 to the Colonial Secretary argued that, by means of the provincial railway and telegraph systems, concentration of regular troops could be effected in a week and there would be at least that much warning before war erupted. The infantry battalion at Toronto was providing a military school for militia officers and its withdrawal

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<sup>55</sup>. G.20/11316, Williams to Secretary of State for War, June 13, 1864.

would put an untimely end to this recently introduced and popular instruction. Lord Monck was then busily engaged with the formation of a coalition government pledged to seek a union of the provinces of British North America, which would make impossible any repetition of the recent political deadlock in Canada; therefore Upper Canadians might now be disposed to contribute to fortification schemes unless "they saw the whole of H. M. troops quartered in the eastern section of the Province and the demand were made upon them for contribution towards the expense of fortifications to be erected solely with a view to the security of Quebec and Montreal."<sup>56</sup>

The War Office did agree to let the 16th Regiment of Foot remain at Toronto temporarily, but otherwise preparations continued for the troops to be concentrated in Lower Canada. On August 26 the Canadian Coalition Government resolved that British persistence in such a policy would cause alarm and discouragement in Upper Canada. There was no basis, of course, for its contention that Canada could be defended as efficiently as during the War of 1812 and that

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56. G.20/11316, Monck to Cardwell, June 16, 1864.

the British regulars should be left where they were, "nothing being more effective in stimulating Military Spirit, and noble emulation in the hearts of youth than the presence of troops, with whose past career so numerous and such glorious recollections are connected."<sup>57</sup> A memorial signed by 70 leading citizens of the Toronto district, and received by the Governor General on August 17, had further suggested that Canadians would regard the military abandonment of Upper Canada as being the prelude to a complete separation from the Mother Country.<sup>58</sup>

Field-Marshal H.R.H. George, Duke of Cambridge, now Commanding-in-Chief the British Army, seems to have been favourably impressed by the arguments received from Canada, and could see no great danger in British troops being scattered about that province in peace-time. His letter of September 9 to the Secretary of State for War suggested that orders be sent to Sir William Fenwick Williams," leaving it to him, in conjunction with the Governor-General, to distribute the troops in Canada as he may think most prudent and best, throwing upon him the responsibility of their

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57. E/State Book A.A., Executive Council Minute, Aug. 26, 1864.

58. G.20/11392 contains a copy.

security and easy means of concentration by means of railroads...."<sup>59</sup> This was done.

Meanwhile there had been controversy within the British Government over a memorandum on Canadian defence circulated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, William Ewart Gladstone, on July 12, 1864. Gladstone considered that the United States would pursue a policy aimed at the peaceful annexation of the provinces of British North America, instead of invading them as military men were suggesting. In any event, the centre of responsibility should be shifted from London to a single colonial capital; a step which implied union of the several provinces. According to Gladstone's line of reasoning:

The United States can scarcely have a quarrel with Canada for its own sake. The more Canada and the British Colonies are detached, as to their defensive not less than their administrative responsibilities, from England, the more likely the Union will be to study friendly relations with them; but, on

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59. W. Verner, The Military Life of H.R.H. George, Duke of Cambridge, Vol. I, p. 360.

the other hand, the more we make ourselves the prominent personages in defending North America, the more the Americans will feel that through the Colonies they wound us in honour and in power; the more an invasion, otherwise almost inhuman, will be justified in the eyes of the world.<sup>60</sup>

The Prime Minister was still that great imperialist Lord Palmerston, however, and he settled the matter in the following minute to the Colonial Secretary, dated July 20:

... it is a question for consideration or division whether our North American Provinces are to be fought for or abandoned. There may be much to be said for the theory put forward by some, that our Colonies are an encumbrance and an expense, and that we should be better without them, but that is not the opinion of England, and it is not mine.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore the Colonial Secretary wrote Lord Monck on August 6, suggesting that the time had now come for Britain and Canada to discuss the problems of North American defence in all its aspects. Yet Cardwell indicated that whatever help Great Britain might provide in an emergency, the defence of

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60. Paul Knaplund, Gladstone and Britain's Imperial Policy, London, Allen & Unwin, 1927, p. 238.

61. P.R.O., 30/22 (Russell Papers), Vol. 27, minute by Palmerston. Cardwell's draft despatch to Monck of July 29, 1864 is quoted in Donald Creighton, John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician, Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1952, p. 361.

Canada would "ever principally depend upon the spirit, the energy and the courage of her own people".<sup>62</sup> He enclosed a copy of the Report made by Lieutenant-Colonel Jervois, for study by the Canadian Government and comparison with the Report submitted by the Defence Commission of 1862. According to the balance of Cardwell's letter:

In any assistance towards a system of defence which Her Majesty's Government could recommend to Parliament, the two primary objects must be -first, an adequate protection for British Troops in Canada; and, secondly, a secure communication with the Naval Forces of Great Britain.

It is obvious that Quebec is the Position which best fulfills these conditions. But Her Majesty's Government have no wish to confine your attention and that of your Advisers to any one point, however important. It is their desire that the whole subject of the defence of Canada should be considered in a comprehensive spirit.<sup>63</sup>

As soon as the British Government learned how much money Canada was prepared to spend on defence, it would decide how much assistance might be sought from the Parliament at Westminster.

The members of the Canadian Government were busy with preparations to attend the conference being convened at Charlottetown on September 1, to discuss a union of the maritime provinces, and to which they had literally invited

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62. G.1/160, Cardwell to Monck, Aug. 6, 1864.

63. Ibid.

themselves. Knowledge that Lieutenant-Colonel Jervois was being sent from Britain to advise them was further reason for postponing an answer to Cardwell's letter.

Lieutenant-Colonel Jervois arrived at Halifax on September 3 and travelled overland to Quebec, where he arrived on September 23. Following interviews with Lord Monck, Sir William Fenwick Williams and individual Canadian ministers, Jervois had a formal meeting with the whole Executive Council on October 14, four days after the Quebec Conference began. In order to answer the questions sent him on October 18, he made a further reconnaissance before submitting a report to the Canadian Government on November 10. This differed from his previous report because he now understood that the Canadian Government was planning to create a naval base at Kingston, a step which would make it possible to maintain war vessels on the Great Lakes for their defence. Jervois explained:

... that although, owing to the length and nature of the frontier of Canada, it was impossible to protect it throughout its whole extent, an enemy must nevertheless acquire possession of certain vital points before he could obtain any decided military advantage; - that there are only a few such points, - and that if proper arrangements were made for the defence of those places by the construction of fortifications, the provision of gun-boats and the improvement of

communications; - the militia and volunteer forces of the country, if properly organized, and aided by British troops, would be enabled to hold them during the period, (only about six months in the year), when military operations on a large scale could be carried on against them, and thus those forces could resist an attack with the best chance of success. 64

With the key points of Quebec and Montreal placed in a proper condition for defence, and the St. Lawrence River commanded by iron-plated warships, a "successful resistance could be made to any attempt to subjugate the country so long as Great Britain had the command of the sea". From the purely military point of view, defence of Lower Canada was the principal consideration, but it was quite possible to devise a scheme for the defence of Upper Canada. The necessary conditions, according to Jervois, were:

... that efficient communication should be established with the Western districts; that the country between Lake St. Louis and Lake Ontario should be protected by naval, in combination with military means; that a naval depot should be provided at Kingston, which place should be fortified so as to form a secure harbour for the gun-boats on Lake Ontario. With the naval command on that lake, troops acting for the defence of the Western Peninsula might, if overpowered, fall back upon its shore at Toronto, where, if proper works were constructed, they might act in conjunction with the naval force for the

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64. Lieut.-Colonel Jervois, Report on the Defence of Canada, (Made to the Provincial Government on 10th November, 1864,) and of the British Naval Stations in the Atlantic; together with observations on The Defence of New Brunswick, &c., London, War Office 1865.

defence of that position, either until reinforcements arrived from other parts of the country, or until the winter season obliged the enemy to withdraw.

Fortifications at Quebec and Montreal would cost 643,000 pounds sterling, plus 100,000 pounds for armament. Fortifications for Kingston and the Toronto-Hamilton area would cost a further 500,000 pounds, plus 100,000 pounds for armament. He estimated the cost of gunboats as being another 300,000 pounds sterling. Jervois had been impressed by what he had seen of the Canadian volunteers; they should do well against an invader, if they had fortifications upon which to fall back.

Jervois subsequently reported to the Secretary of State for War that there were a further 1,764 volunteers in New Brunswick and 1,300 in Prince Edward Island. During the past summer 34,873 militia had attended summer camp for a week in Nova Scotia, while 2,364 volunteers had trained for a longer period. "With the exception of the western frontier of New Brunswick, the maritime provinces of British North America are bounded by the sea," he wrote; "consequently their defence must be provided for by naval forces; and hence, amongst other reasons, the importance of Halifax as a centre

of refuge and action for our fleet...."<sup>65</sup> "With regard to the land frontier of New Brunswick with Maine, he wrote almost as optimistically:

... it is considered that, unless with a view of advancing against the town of St. John, desultory attacks from the state of Maine, for the purpose of cutting off the land communication to Quebec, would alone have to be guarded against. Considering the present wild and unsettled state of the country, and the almost entire absence of communication from any point in the United States which would serve as a base for an enemy to act upon those parts where the eastern road from Nova Scotia to Canada is nearest the frontier, it does not appear likely that any expedition in force would be employed for the latter object, unless the enemy first obtained possession of St. John as a base of operations. Any desultory attacks upon the western frontier of New Brunswick might therefore be met by a militia force in the field, aided by such temporary defences as might be deemed necessary in time of war, by the general officer in command. Gun-boats on the St. John River might play a part in the defence.<sup>66</sup>

Lieutenant-Colonel Jervois could not, however, resist posing the most important question of all: "whether the British force now in Canada shall be withdrawn, in order to avoid the risk of its defeat, or whether the necessary measures shall be taken to enable that force to be of use for the defence of the province."<sup>67</sup>

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65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

The Canadian Government felt that Great Britain was obligated to go on playing a major part in the defence of Canada, but its members agreed on November 15, 1864, to ask Parliament for money to construct fortifications at Montreal, provided that the British Government undertook to construct the additional fortifications recommended for Quebec and supply the armament necessary at both places. If Canada should now accept financial responsibility for the fortifications recommended for Kingston and Toronto-Hamilton, however, the other provinces might decide that the price of the proposed Confederation was too high to pay.<sup>68</sup> That a Canadian Government should have offered to do this much must be attributed to genuine anxiety that the recent surge of anti-Canadian feeling in the United States, caused by Confederate activities emanating from a Canadian base such as the St. Albans raid of October 1<sup>o</sup>, would lead to an attack on Canada as soon as the Confederacy should be defeated. The Canadian Government would soon go so far as to place 30 companies of volunteer militia on border duty

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68. E/State Book A.A., Executive Council Minute, Nov. 16, 1864.

for the winter and spring of 1865.<sup>69</sup>

Since the Canadian offer, forwarded in Lord Monck's despatch of November 16 to the Colonial Secretary, also hinged on there being a British guarantee of the Canadian loan that would be required in order to pay for the proposed fortifications, the British Government was not greatly impressed. Cardwell's letter of December 3 to the Governor General had, however, expressed warm approval of the recently received Quebec Resolutions,<sup>70</sup> so his letter of January 21, 1865 agreed that a final decision on the matter of fortifications might be postponed until Confederation was achieved. Cardwell then added that the parliament at Westminster would be asked to vote money for improving the defences of Quebec, because it would be a matter of "just reproach against the British Government if those Troops were suffered to remain in a position which, on the outbreak of war, they might not be able to hold until the military and

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69. Correspondence relating to the Fenian Invasion, and the Rebellion of the Southern States, Ottawa, Taylor, 1869, pp. 25-28.

70. G.21/26, Cardwell to Monck, Dec. 3, 1864.

naval resources of the Country could be made available for their support".<sup>71</sup> Cardwell's letter also suggested that the "proposed defences at Montreal are so important to the general safety of the Province, and to the maintenance of the communication between the Districts West of Montreal, and the naval and military power of the Mother country, that Her Majesty's Government trust they may look with confidence to the Government of Canada for the immediate construction of these works".<sup>72</sup> The British Government would, however, supply the armament required at Montreal as well as at Quebec.

At the same time that the Army Estimates were submitted to the British Parliament at Westminster, calling for the appropriation of 50,000 pounds to be spent at Quebec during the coming fiscal year, Lieutenant-Colonel Jervois' latest report was tabled. The result was stormy debate in both the House of Lords and House of Commons, with opponents

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71. Papers relating to the Conferences which have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and a Deputation from the Executive Council of Canada, appointed to confer with Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the Defence of the Province, 4th session, 8th Parliament of Canada, 1865, p. 1.

72. Ibid.

arguing that it would be impossible to defend Canada against the United States and urging that all British troops should be withdrawn to avoid the possible ignominy of their being captured by invading American armies. The appropriation was approved by the House of Commons on March 23, by a vote of 275 to 40, but there was the stipulation that the defence of Canada "must rest partly on the mother country, but mainly and principally on Canada herself".<sup>73</sup>

On the following day, March 24, the Canadian Government, which had been following the British debates in the press, appointed a delegation to visit London and confer with the British Government on Confederation, defence, the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States, and the need to settle the Hudson's Bay Company's claims to the Northwest.<sup>74</sup> Three days later its delegation of John A. Macdonald, Georges

73. C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871, pp. 171-173.

74. Papers relating to the Conferences which have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and a Deputation from the Executive Council of Canada, appointed to confer with Her Majesty's Government on the subject of the Defence of the Province, 1865, op. cit., p.2.

E. Cartier, George Brown and Alexander T. Galt was instructed to state that, if Britain would defend Canada in the event of war, Canada would "bear its rightful share of the burden of military defence".<sup>75</sup> No indication was given, however, of how this might be calculated.

The Anglo-American conference got underway in London on April 26, with informal talks with the Colonial Secretary. In a Report dated May 17, the Defence Committee in Great Britain, whose august membership included the Duke of Cambridge, General Burgoyne and Admiral Sir Frederick W. Grey, confirmed that the latest Jervois' Report was based upon sound principles. The principal base for defensive operations, it pointed out, was Quebec which "may be considered as the Torres Vedras of Canada".<sup>76</sup> The Canadian delegates were unwilling to separate the question of fortifications at Montreal from those for Kingston and the

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75. C.O. 42/648, Monck to Cardwell, March 28, 1865.

76. "Memorandum by the Defence Committee on the Report of Lieut.-Colonel Jervois on the defence of Canada, May 17, 1865".

Toronto-Hamilton area and the question of naval armament on Lake Ontario. They agreed to ask the Canadian Parliament to undertake these fortifications, provided the British Parliament would immediately agree to guarantee the necessary Canadian loan, and they were assured that the Royal Navy would earmark an "adequate naval force for Lake Ontario for any emergency".<sup>77</sup> The British Government refused, however, to guarantee a loan for a purpose that had not yet been considered by the Canadian Parliament, but agreed to provide the armament for the fortifications when they were constructed. The Rush-Bagot Agreement made it impossible to take any naval action on Lake Ontario prior to the actual outbreak of hostilities. Since no overall agreement seemed possible, the Canadian and British Ministers agreed that priority should be given to the Confederation of the several provinces of British North America. Yet the Canadians would persist in regarding the penultimate paragraph of Cardwell's letter to the Governor General dated June 17, detailing the decisions of the conference, as a permanent commitment by Great Britain to defend Canada:

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77. British Parliamentary Papers, 1865, Vol. XXXVII, no. 3535, "Papers relating to the Conferences which have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and a Deputation from the Executive Council of Canada appointed to confer with Her Majesty's Government on Subjects of Importance to the Province".

... it seemed sufficient that Her Majesty's Government should accept the assurances given by the Canadian Ministers on the part of Canada, that that Province is ready to devote all her resources both in men and money to the maintenance of her connexion with the Mother Country, and should assure them in return that the Imperial Government fully acknowledged the reciprocal obligation of defending every portion of the Empire with all the resources at its command.<sup>78</sup>

The British Government did adopt "every proper means" to secure the early assent of the maritime provinces to a union so well calculated to simplify the system of defence. Lieutenant-Governor Arthur Gordon of New Brunswick did as he was instructed and pushed the cause of Confederation, but the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia proved intractable and had to be replaced by Sir William Fenwick Williams.<sup>79</sup> Sir John Michel assumed the appointment of Lieutenant-General Commanding in North America,

Meanwhile the American Civil War had come to an end: General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9

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78. Ibid., p. 3.

79. James A Gibson, "The Colonial Office View of Canadian Federation, 1856-1868", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XXXV (December, 1954).

and final Confederate resistance ended on May 26. Contrary to Canadian fears, the war-weary veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic quickly melted away, with 640,000 of the more than 1,000,000 officers and enlisted men being demobilized by the end of the first week in August, 1865.<sup>80</sup> This prompted Lieutenant-General Sir John Michel to advise the Governor General during September that the United States Government had "no desire to annex Canada". But, he immediately continued, "it stands to reason that the extreme weakness at present of our military position in this country must embolden that large party in America who are hostile to England".<sup>81</sup> Since Canadians were loyal, and Britain would not desert them, it was necessary to render the country defensible against fillibustering expeditions.

These were already being planned by the Irish-American secret society known as the Fenian Brotherhood. This organization was attracting the support of Irish veterans who had not held steady employment prior to enlistment and who now expressed interest in striking a blow

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80. Information from Chief Historian, Office of the Chief of Military History, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, U.S.A., Feb. 28, 1964.

81. Macdonald Papers/100, Michel to Macdonald, Aug. 14, 1867, enclosure.

against the hated English who were considered to be oppressing their relatives still living in Ireland. The dissemination of Fenian propaganda was greatly helped by the fact that American politicians had managed to keep alive old grudges by fiery anti-British speeches, aimed at winning votes and distracting attention from the slum conditions in which most of the Irish lived in Boston, New York, and other large cities. Yet agents in the pay of the British and Canadian Governments found it comparatively easy to infiltrate into its inner circles.<sup>82</sup>

A warning from the British Consul at New York caused the Canadian Government to act on November 9, 1865. Nine companies of volunteer militia were called out for border duty at Prescott, Brockville, Niagara, Windsor and Sarnia, and placed at the disposal of Lieutenant-General Sir John Michel.<sup>83</sup> He did not anticipate any Fenian action that he could not easily crush; should anything serious

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82. C.P. Stacey, "Fenianism and the Rise of National Feeling in Canada at the Time of Confederation," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XII (September, 1931).

83. Report on the State of the Militia of the Province of Canada, Ottawa, Hunter, Rose & Co., 1866, pp. 65-66.

develop, Michel wrote the Colonial Secretary on November 13, he would "at once call out the remainder of the volunteer militia, and act as respects H. M.'s Troops as circumstances may appear to demand".<sup>84</sup> By this time the volunteers were reasonably proficient on the whole, because of the instruction received from British drill sergeants. Four additional military schools had been opened during 1865, by British units at Montreal, Kingston, Hamilton and London, to qualify militia officers, and a three-week camp had been held at Laprairie for 1,050 of the graduates during September.<sup>85</sup> For several weeks the unmobilized units at Montreal, Kingston, Toronto and London maintained a nightly guard on their armouries. Along the land frontier of the 45th parallel, from St. Regis to Rouse's Point, a system of squad alarm posts was established at two mile intervals.<sup>86</sup>

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84. C.O. 42/650, Michel to Cardwell, Nov. 13, 1865.

85. Report of the State of the Militia of the Province of Canada, 1866, op. cit., pp. 15-21.

86. Ibid., p. 5.

Contrary to normal practice a few warships had remained at Halifax when the balance of the squadron left to spend the winter at Bermuda.<sup>87</sup> The defences of Halifax were being improved, in accordance with recent recommendations but, as Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Milne had written earlier:

I imagine in the event of a war that the Military would still look to the Navy to assist in protecting that Port; and that it will be in vain to point out, as I have often had occasion to do, that a Naval Port should serve as a place of refuge, where a fleet may be protected while refitting and the dismantled fleet should not be relied on for the Protection of the fort.<sup>88</sup>

Secret service reports that the Fenians were planning an invasion on St. Patrick's Day, 1866 caused the Canadian Government to call out 10,000 volunteer militia on Thursday, March 7. By Saturday afternoon nearly 14,000 officers and men were on duty: whole companies had turned out instead of merely the designated quotas; other patriotic citizens had just turned up, including a number of men who had hurriedly abandoned jobs in the United States and rushed home. The excitement and expectancy were heightened by widespread requests for arms and ammunition to equip groups

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87. Adm. 128/114, Memorandum by Admiral Sir Rodney Mundy, Aug. 31, 1869.

88. Adm. 120/114, Report by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Milne, March, 1864.

calling themselves 'Home Guards'. Since nothing happened, all but the companies which had been on full time duty all winter were dismissed before the end of the month.<sup>89</sup>

During the same month Fenians began to collect at Calais and Freeport in Maine. The Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick had, however, been kept fully informed by secret agents and informers of the invasion being contemplated there. In consequence, British war vessels were patrolling Passamaquoddy Bay, the number of British regulars in the province was increased, local volunteers and home guards were on duty, and arrangements were in hand to summon help from Nova Scotia. American politicians did not want to alienate the large Irish vote, with a mid-term election in the offing, but news that consignments of rifles had reached Calais finally forced the United States Government into action. On April 18 Major-General George C. Meade, the victor of Gettysburg, reached Calais with a small force of regular troops. He seized the store of arms and warned the Fenian leaders that any breach of neutrality would be followed by their arrest. This put an end to the planned invasion, but the British regulars and local volunteers now deployed along

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89. Report on the State of the Militia of the Province of Canada, 1866, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

the border as far north as Woodstock remained for several weeks, until the last of the Fenians had drifted back to Boston or New York.<sup>90</sup>

Reports that the Fenians planned a three-pronged invasion of Canada caused 14,000 volunteer militia to be called for service on May 31. The balance was called out on June 2, to place more than 20,000 amateur soldiers at the disposal of Lieutenant-General Sir John Michel. There was, however, no organization to provide them with blankets, tents or rations and they had to depend upon the local population for sustenance, unless they were lucky enough to be attached to a column of British regulars.<sup>91</sup> The Canadian Government had already chartered 13 steam vessels for service as gunboats on the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes, and these were now manned:<sup>92</sup> nucleus crews were provided by H.M.S. Aurora and H.M.S. Pylades which had been

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90. Harold A. Davis, "The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. XXXVI (December, 1955).

91. Report on the State of the Militia of the Province of Canada, 1866, pp. 22-24.

92. Macpherson, "List of vessels employed on British Naval Service on the Great Lakes, 1755-1875", p. 179.

ordered respectively to Quebec and Montreal by the Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West Indian Stations; the balance was found from the naval companies of volunteer militia.<sup>93</sup> Major-General George Napier, commanding British troops in the western part of the province from his headquarters at Toronto, was widely considered "quite useless at all times as a commander", so Sir John Michel sent his Assistant Quartermaster-General, Colonel Garnet Wolseley, to advise him.<sup>94</sup>

By the time Wolseley reached Toronto, however, the campaign was over. The 850 Fenians who had actually crossed from Buffalo into the Niagara peninsula on the night of May 31 had managed to defeat about the same number of volunteers at Ridgeway on the morning of June 2. Yet the Fenians were no longer the disciplined soldiers who had fought in the Civil War, and no longer were they interested in running any real risk of getting killed, so they promptly retired on Fort Erie. Here they dispersed a small force of volunteers who had disembarked from the requisitioned

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93. Adm.128/114, Report by Vice-Admiral Sir James Hope, May, 1867.

94. Wolseley, The Story of a Soldier's Life, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 160.

tugboat V.T. Robb instead of continuing to patrol the Niagara River as ordered. By the following day, when Lieutenant-Colonel George Peacocke's column of regulars and volunteers got there, the Fenians were all back in Buffalo and temporarily in the custody of American federal authorities. Fenian concentrations at Ogdensburg and Malone were deterred from crossing the St. Lawrence by the presence of gun-boats in the river and volunteers on the Canadian shore. On June 7, about 1,000 Fenians did cross from Vermont into Missisquoi County and occupied Pigeon Hill after driving off the nearest volunteer companies on duty; but they were not reinforced and American authorities seized their supply of stores at St. Albans, so they conveniently retreated back to Vermont when British regulars from Montreal appeared two days later. With danger seemingly at an end, the Canadian Government dismissed all but 2,500 volunteers on June 18. With the approach of a busy summer season its Adjutant General of Militia had advised that he would "have great difficulty in getting even that number who would desire to remain".<sup>95</sup>

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95. E/State Book A.C., Minute of Executive Council, June 18, 1866.

Reports of renewed Fenian activities along the Niagara frontier led to a Volunteer Camp of Exercise being opened at Thorold on August 22, 1866. Its commandant, Colonel Garnet Wolseley, was given a wing of the 16th Regiment of Foot and a demi-battery of Royal Artillery as a permanent brigade nucleus for the volunteer units which were limited to a single week of camp. In practice, of course, there were only five days of instruction in each of the seven periods of camp, during which 472 officers and 6,157 other ranks received training intended to prevent a repetition of the reverses suffered at Ridgeway and Fort Erie. Colonel Wolseley subsequently reported that the efficiency of volunteer units varied in direct proportion to the number of retired British officers and graduates of the military schools present in camp. Range practice disclosed that a "large proportion of the arms would not go off, for although clean outside, the nipples of many were clogged with dirt".<sup>95</sup> Another British officer who was being employed as Adjutant/<sup>General</sup> of Militia, Colonel Patrick L. MacDougall, explained in his Annual Report that the volunteers:

95. E/State Book A.C., Minute of Executive Council, June 18, 1866.

96. Report on the State of the Militia of the Province of Canada for the year 1867, Ottawa, Hunter, Rose & Co., 1868, pp. 3-4, 105 and 112.

... take a pride in turning out on parade smart and clean and soldier like as regards the outward appearance; but it is too often the case ... that their rifles are so foul that they cannot be fired. Yet it is upon the serviceable condition of his weapon at any moment that the value of a volunteer depends. Unless it is kept constantly in a state for immediate use the volunteer is only a sham soldier, and his external trappings are but a useless expense to the country.<sup>97</sup>

Yet plans to hold a similar camp at St. Johns in October for the rural volunteers of Lower Canada were only circumvented by continued inclement weather.<sup>98</sup>

The Governor General's request for the transfer of an additional infantry battalion of British regulars from Halifax had been approved, and he was allowed to retain temporarily the two battalions due to leave Canada that summer.<sup>99</sup> Also at his request, the Admiralty sent three of its "Crimean Gunboats", Heron, Britomart and Cherub, to serve on the Great Lakes.<sup>100</sup> One of these gunboats, with a

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97. Ibid., p. 2.

98. Ibid., p. 4.

99. C.O. 42/655, Monck to Cardwell, June 6 and 21, 1866.

100. Ibid., June 22, 1866.

crew of six officers and 35 ratings, was positioned on each of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and Lake Huron. Control of all inland naval operations was exercised by Captain Algernon F.R. Horsey of H.M.S. Aurora.<sup>101</sup> That autumn the 13th Hussars, two infantry battalions and a reinforcement draft of 500 rank and file joined the British Army in Canada. By the end of the year there were 11,741 British other ranks in Canada and 4,976 in Nova Scotia command.<sup>102</sup> Arrangements now existed to facilitate the employment of volunteers with the regular forces. Three mixed brigades were organized on paper in Upper Canada and four in Lower Canada for employment in a mobile role. Each consisted of one infantry battalion of regulars and three of volunteers, a field battery of regulars or volunteers, and a cavalry troop of volunteers. The commander and his principal staff officers were to be British regulars.<sup>103</sup>

This reinforcement of Canada had been reluctantly approved by a Conservative Government that Lord Derby had led

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101. Adm. 128/114, Report by Vice-Admiral Sir James Hope, May, 1867.

102. M.O. 73/8, Other Rank Strength, Canada and Nova Scotia, Jan. 1, 1867.

103. Report on the State of the Militia of the Province of Canada for the year 1867, op. cit., p. 12.

into office during the summer of 1866. His Chancellor of the Exchequer, Benjamin Disraeli, was still as much of an anti-imperialist as the previous incumbent of that office, W.E. Gladstone, and Disraeli's letter of September 30 to the Prime Minister had expressed a widespread view:

We must seriously consider our Canadian position, which is most illegitimate. An army maintained in a country which does not permit us even to govern it! What an anomaly!

It can never be our pretence, or our policy to defend the Canadian frontier against the U.S. If the colonists can't, as a general rule defend themselves against the Fenians they can do nothing. They ought to be, and must be, strong enough for that. Power and influence we should exercise in Asia; consequently in Eastern Europe, consequently also in Western Europe; but what is the use of these colonial deadweights which we do not govern?

I don't regret what we did the other day about Canada, because the circumstances were very peculiar. A successful raid of the Fenians was not off the cards, which would have upset your untried Ministry, and have produced an insurrection in Ireland; and it was not fair to the Canadians, when, at the last, they were making some attempts at self-defence, to allow them to be crushed in the bud of their patriotism. But the moment the American elections are over, we should withdraw the great body of our troops, and foster a complete development of self-government.

Leave the Canadians to defend themselves; recall the African squadron; give up the settlements on the west coast of Africa; and we shall make a saving which will, at the same time enable us to build ships and have a good Budget.

What is more, we shall have accomplished something definite, tangible, for the good of the country. In these days, more than ever, the people look to results. What we have done about Canada is perfectly defensible, if it is not looked upon as a permanent increase of our Canadian establishments.<sup>104</sup>

It was only natural therefore that Lord Derby's Government should throw its wholehearted support behind the proposals for a confederation of British North America and that its Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Carnarvon, should bring provincial delegations into conference at Westminster in December, 1866. The Westminster resolutions then agreed upon became the basis of the British North America Act introduced into the British House of Lords on February 12, 1867. The accompanying Canada Railway Loan Bill, which would provide a British guarantee that an Intercolonial Railway would actually be constructed, attracted as little comment. Both measures were designed to lessen the colonial defence burden borne by the British people. An Intercolonial Railway would not be completed until 1876, but a Dominion of Canada became a reality on July 1, 1867.

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104. W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, London, 1910-1920, Vol. IV, pp. 476-477 as quoted by Stacey, Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871, pp. 193-194.

The summer of 1867 passed quietly, without a single Fenian scare. The augmented British military garrison of the year before remained and Royal Naval personnel patrolled the Great Lakes, despite suggestions that their strength might be reduced. By September 30 the United States regular army was reduced to 56,815 officers and enlisted men, of whom only 1,323 were stationed in 18 infantry and artillery companies along the Canadian border from Eastport, Maine to Lake Superior.<sup>105</sup> In anticipation of relinquishing his appointment of Lieutenant-General Commanding in North America that month, Sir John Michel had sent his political-military views to the Dominion of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, as early as August 14. Although current Anglo-American matters in dispute might lead to war, making it necessary for Canada to look to her defences and be prepared to put up such a good fight that the United States would be deterred from aggression, Sir John Michel was anything but pessimistic in his memorandum:

In reviewing this subject, it is evident that the United States of to-day is far different in point of strength to what it may become a few years hence. I think we may assume that for some years the United States Government will (if possible) avoid external political complications.

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105. Information from the Chief Historian, Office of the Chief of Military History, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., Feb. 28, 1964.

She has work enough on her hands in repairing the state of her finances and in bringing the late Confederate States into hearty Union, and it is hardly to be conceived that she would think of endeavouring to annex Canada until these matters are satisfactorily adjusted.

A war between England and the United States would be so totally opposed to the best interests of each, that nothing but the temptation held out of an early conquest of Canada would induce the Government of the United States to enter upon so suicidal a course.

As each year rolls by, so the vast intercommercial trade between England and the United States increases. There is a growing tendency towards a better understanding on the head of International Law, whilst the policy of England and the United States as respects external trade, and the general freedom of the human race, is daily becoming more and more alike.

Thus distant complications are less to be feared, and war between England and the United States will become more and more improbable.<sup>106</sup>

At the moment the citadel at Quebec was being modernized and three earthen forts were being built across the St. Lawrence River, beyond Lévis, to ensure its continuance in British hands as the key base for a successful defence of Canada. For, despite continued efforts to reduce colonial military expenditure, each time of recent crisis had found Great Britain ready to make a display of strength on behalf of people who wanted to remain within the British Empire.

<sup>106</sup>. Macdonald Papers/100, Michel to Macdonald, Aug 14, 1867, and attached "Memorandum on the present position of Canada and the expediency of strengthening her Defences".

## CONCLUSION

During 1868 there was some reduction in the size of the British Army's garrison<sup>1</sup> and agreement that the services of the Royal Navy's three Crimean gunboats would no longer be required on the Great Lakes.<sup>2</sup> Because of the rapid spread of American settlement in Minnesota and resultant clamour for annexation of the whole Northwest, the Canadian Government sent Sir Georges E. Cartier and William McDougall to London late in the year to hasten negotiations with the proprietary Hudson's Bay Company for acquiring Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories. Cartier, as Minister of Militia and Defence, was also to discuss with the British Government the question of constructing fortifications at Montreal.<sup>3</sup> Cartier and McDougall found, however, that a new British Government had other ideas.

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1. G.1/172, Buckingham to Office Administering Government, Dec. 8, 1868.

2. Adm.128/114, Memorandum by Admiral Sir Rodney Mundy, Aug. 31, 1869.

3. Canadian Sessional Papers, 1869, no. 60.

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The Liberal Ministry, which a recent British general election had brought into office, was headed by William Ewart Gladstone, who was not interested in self-governing colonies. British politicians were yearly becoming more impressed by the efficiency of the Prussian army, which had humbled Austria in a six week's war in 1866, and more depressed by the unreformed state of the small British Army, which was too scattered about the Empire to provide a field force for intervention in Europe the next time the balance of power might be threatened there. Edward Cardwell had been made Secretary of State for War to create order out of the chaos. One of his first proposals, immediately approved by Gladstone, was to reduce the number of British troops stationed overseas from 56,000 to 26,000.<sup>4</sup> Gladstone and his colleagues were convinced that the next crisis in Europe could be the occasion for trouble in North America. As the Foreign Secretary, Lord Clarendon, subsequently wrote to Queen Victoria:

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4. Cardwell Papers, Box 2/6, Cardwell to Gladstone, Jan. 9, 1869; Gladstone to Cardwell, Jan. 11, 1869.

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It is the unfriendly state of our relations with America that to a great extent paralyzes our action in Europe. There is not the slightest doubt that if we were engaged in a Continental quarrel we should immediately find ourselves at war with the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The obvious answer was to resolve the causes for dispute with the United States. This was being attempted. Another possibility was the removal of all British troops from North America, because of the widely held assumption that their continued presence would merely incite the Americans to attack whenever an opportune moment occurred. Withdrawal of British troops, it was hoped, would hasten Canada along the road to independent nationhood and put an end to a connection which the economy-minded anti-imperialists now governing Great Britain had no desire to maintain a "single year" after it should become "injurious or distasteful" to the young dominion.<sup>6</sup>

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5. George Earle Buckle (ed.), The Letters of Queen Victoria, Second Series, A Selection from Her Majesty's Correspondence, and Journal between the years 1862 and 1878, London, John Murray, 1926, Vol. I, p. 594.

6. C.O. 43/156, Granville to Young, June 16, 1869.

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The Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, helped Cartier and McDougall reach a satisfactory settlement with the Hudson's Bay Company, but he took them completely by surprise with the suggestion that British troops might be withdrawn from Canada.<sup>7</sup>

Cardwell emphasized, during a speech in the House of Commons on March 11, when his army estimates were being debated, that the "true defence of our colonies is that they live under the aegis of the name of England, and that war with them is war with England".<sup>8</sup> The letter which the Colonial Secretary sent to the Governor General of Canada on April 14 stated that about 2,000 British regulars would be left in Nova Scotia to defend Halifax, which would continue to be an imperial station, and about 4,000 in the whole of Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. The balance of the existing force would be withdrawn from Canada during the course of the coming summer. Even this must be considered a temporary measure, for it would soon be unnecessary to

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7. Cardwell Papers, Box 5/28, Granville to Cardwell, Dec. 27, 1868.

8. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, CXCV, cols. 1111-1139.

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have any British troops in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, except possibly instructional cadres for the Canadian volunteer militia.<sup>9</sup>

The story of Cardwell's persistent effort to achieve this goal and the equally persistent but unsuccessful Canadian attempt to stave off withdrawal of their British defenders has been told in considerable detail by Colonel C.P. Stacey in Canada and the British Army, 1846-1871.

There is no need here to do more than merely detail the most relevant points. Complete withdrawal from Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick was delayed by the ineffectual Fenian Raids of 1870 and the need to send an Anglo-Canadian military expedition to Fort Garry so that law and order might be established in the new province of Manitoba.<sup>10</sup>

A small garrison continued at Quebec until November 11, 1871, so that the bargaining position of Canada's Prime Minister would not be visibly weakened during the negotiation of the

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9. Returns to Addresses of the Senate and House of Commons, relative to the Withdrawal of the Troops from the Dominion; and on the Defence of the Country; and Honorable Mr. Campbell's Report, Ottawa, Taylor, 1871, p. 2-4.

10. British Parliamentary Papers, 1871, Vol. XLVIII, c. 298, is "Correspondence relative to the Recent Expedition to the Red River Settlement: with Journal of Operations."

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many-sided Treaty of Washington, which resolved all existing Anglo-American differences.<sup>11</sup> By this time the United States Army was reduced to 31,108 officers and enlisted men; by far the greatest number was stationed west of the Mississippi River, and only 867 were near the border with Canada.<sup>12</sup>

Yet the British Government was not, as the Canadian Government had persisted in arguing, renegeing on the commitment actually made in Cardwell's despatch of June 21, 1865. Lord Granville's despatch to the Governor General of February 12, 1870, detailing the evacuation scheme, had carefully concluded as follows:

You will take care to explain to your Advisers that the arrangements contemplated in this Despatch, and which are based on principles applicable not exclusively to the Dominion, but to the other self-governing British Colonies, are contingent upon a time of peace, and are in no way intended to alter or diminish the obligations which exist on both sides in case of foreign war.<sup>13</sup>

11. Cardwell Papers, Box 5/31, Kimberley to Cardwell, Dec. 2, 1870; Kimberley to Gladstone, Dec. 9, 1870.

12. Information from Chief Historian, Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, Washington, U.S.A., Feb. 28, 1964.

13. Returns to Addresses by the Senate and House of Commons, relative to the Withdrawal of the Troops from the Dominion; and on the Defence of the Country; and Honorable Mr. Campbell's Report, op. cit., p. 9.

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British troops remained at Halifax until January 13, 1906. Plans long continued to be made on paper for the return of British troops to Quebec in case of war with the United States, either by troopship up the St. Lawrence River or overland on the Intercolonial Railway which was completed in 1876. There would be more than one moment of crisis, and Canadian protestations that local interests had been sacrificed to ensure good Anglo-American relations, particularly after the Alaskan Boundary award of 1903, but the Treaty signed at Washington on May 8, 1871 was the beginning of an era of friendship that no one really wanted to endanger.

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This thesis is based primarily on documents in the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa, including microfilm or transcripts of documents held by the Public Record Office in London, England. Additional material was obtained on microfilm from both the Public Record Office in London and the National Archives in Washington, United States of America. Considerable use was made of printed collections of documents. Little use was made of newspapers and parliamentary papers because defence has always been considered to be a confidential matter. The books and articles listed were helpful but seldom do these secondary sources provide more than a few pages, or even a few lines, of background material; hence more would be learned about them from examining the footnote references in the text of this thesis than from any brief annotation.

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- G.1 is original despatches from the Colonial Office;
- G.5 is Colonial Office Letter Books;
- G.12 is copies of letters sent to Colonial Office;
- G.20 is the Civil Secretary's correspondence;
- G.21 is Governor General's numbered files.

Brock Papers is a small part of the correspondence of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock.

Durham Papers consists of correspondence amassed by Lord Durham when in Canada.

Haldimand Papers is a large "B" Series respecting the service of Lieutenant-General Sir Frederic Haldimand in Canada.

Macdonald Papers is the extensive collection left by Sir John A. Macdonald; only Vol. 100 is directly relevant.

New Brunswick Letter Book. Vol. 1 (1861-1864) contains copies of considerable military correspondence by Lieutenant-Governor Arthur Gordon.

Public Record Office (P.R.O.):

Admiralty Papers respecting North America are available on microfilm in P.A.C.:

- Adm.1 is Commander-in-Chief letters;
- Adm.7 is miscellaneous planning documents;
- Adm.128 is Commander-in-Chief reports.

Colonial Office Papers respecting North America are available on microfilm in P.A.C.:

- C.O.42 is Canadian correspondence;
- C.O.43 is copies of Letters sent to Canada;

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W.O.1 is In-Letters;  
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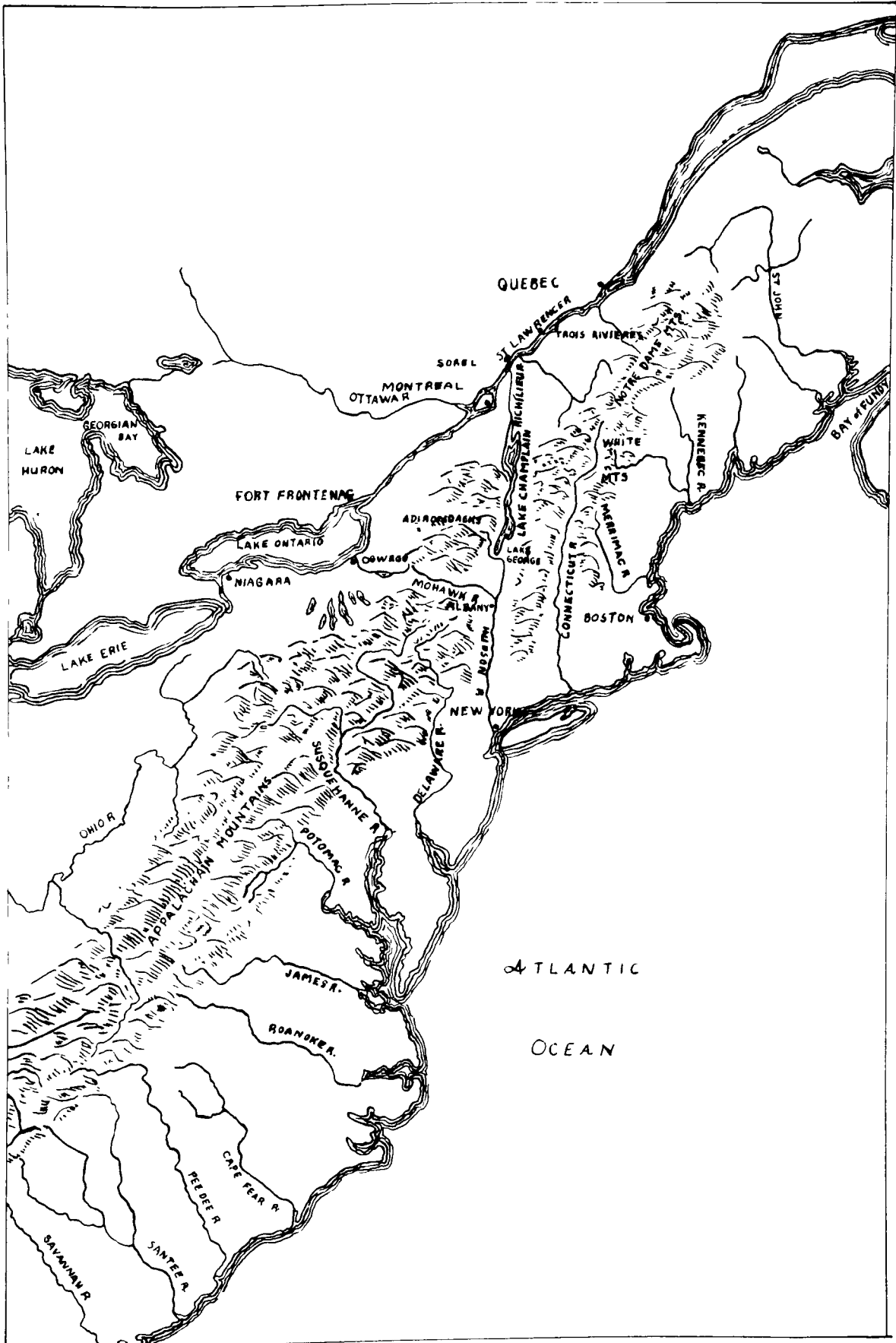
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APPENDIX I

MAP

The sketch map on the following page, drawn by Cpl. D. S. Fesselring, P.C.E., is intended merely to indicate how lakes, rivers and mountain ranges made access to the interior of the continent easy or difficult, and thereby limited the number of routes by which an invader might enter Canada.



## APPENDIX 2

## GLOSSARY

The following simple descriptions are intended to help readers unfamiliar with the military terminology used during the period covered by this thesis.

Abattis was a defence formed by placing felled tress lengthwise one on top of the other with their branches towards the enemy.

Bateau was a flat-bottomed boat, 30 to 40 feet long and pointed at both ends; it was propelled by oars or poles, and occasionally by an improvised sail.

Battalion of infantry varied from a peace-time strength of as few as 400 officers and other ranks to better than 1100 all ranks.

Cadre was a small group of officers and non-commissioned officers, providing the nucleus for a new regiment or the instructors for a large force of recruits.

Carronade was a cannon whose overall weight and size were much less than that of a comparable long gun, and whose gun crew could be much smaller. Thus more carronades could be crowded onto small war vessels, but their maximum range was only 400 to 600 yards compared to 3,000-4,000 yards for long guns firing the same weight of metal.

Counterguard was a narrow detached rampart, placed immediately in front of an important work, to protect it from being breached.

Counterscarp was the outer wall or slope of the ditch which supported the covered way.

Fencibles differed from British regular troops in that they had engaged to serve only within a specified area, such as British North America.

Filibuster was an adventurer who engaged in unauthorized and irregular warfare against a foreign state.

Flank Companies contained the younger and more alert soldiers, who could be employed on tasks requiring some individual initiative; grenadier company was on the right flank, and light infantry company on the left.

Frigate was a single decked sailing ship, carrying anywhere from 24 to 38 guns.

Glacis was the parapet of the covered way extended in a long slope to meet the natural surface of the ground, so that every part of it could be swept by the fire from the ramparts.

Half-pay officers were surplus to regimental requirements, but might be recalled to duty anytime there was a vacancy.

Horse Guards was the location in London, England of the headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army.

Incorporated Militia comprised units of volunteers who had agreed to serve continuously for longer than the period prescribed in the Militia Act and thus could be properly trained as combatant troops.

Martello Tower was a small circular fort with massive walls.

Militia comprised all physically fit males aged 18 to 60, with such exceptions as crown officials, ferrymen, millers, clergymen and recognized conscientious objectors. Individual quotas were assigned to companies for a particular duty and selection was by ballot, or lot. Usual duties were transporting supplies, building roads and fortifications, and guarding prisoners. Such service was compulsory, unless men should volunteer. Since normally there was no training, apart from periodic musters, it was termed sedentary militia.

Paddle-sloop was a small paddle-wheel steamer, but still basically a sloop with sails.

Petite Guerre was the name then given to guerrilla warfare.

pr. is the abbreviation for pounder, normally used to describe cannon, which were classified according to the weight of their projectile.

Provincial Troops were volunteers enlisted and paid by a colonial government for service which was primarily defensive in nature.

Regiment of Foot usually consisted of only one battalion of infantry in peace-time. Additional battalions were raised for war service and a second battalion was designated thus - 2/8th or King's Regiment of Foot. Cavalry regiments, which seldom served in North America, had only about half the strength of an infantry battalion.

Volunteers were enlisted for specific periods under the provisions of a Militia Act and were subject to the British Army's Articles of War only when serving with regular troops during war or other emergency.

War Office in London, England housed the Secretary of State for War and the various Departments which administered the British Army. Until 1854 the appointment was Secretary of State for War and the Colonies.

Warships made up a fleet's line of battle and, during the days of sail, these ships of the line carried anywhere from 50 to well over 100 guns.

War Vessels were smaller sloops, brigs and schooners, with less than 20 guns.

## APPENDIX 3

## ABSTRACT

Defence of Canada, 1763-1871

A Study of British Strategy

Canadians are not military-minded, hence the widespread belief that the defence of Canada during the 18th and 19th centuries was conducted in a haphazard manner by British officers who lacked plans to guide them in case of emergency. That this was not the case, and that a definite British strategy began to evolve shortly after the Conquest, is the contention of this thesis.

Governor Guy Carleton had protested against the defenceless condition of Quebec and the small force of British regular troops available to him, yet even he visualized Canada only as a base for punitive operations against rebellious colonists and was unprepared for their invasion of his province in 1775. Carleton did, however, manage to hold onto Quebec until help arrived in the spring of 1776.

The plans of Carleton's successors were based on his experience. As long as the Royal Navy ruled the North

Atlantic and Quebec was held by a British garrison, any American attempt to conquer the continuing British colonies in North America would fail. British troops concentrated in the Montreal area, which was then the geographical and commercial heart of Canada, would make a fighting withdrawal on Quebec in the face of an enemy who had advanced down the Lake Champlain-Richelieu River route. Regulars and militia in the eastern districts of Upper Canada might harry the rear of the Americans as they moved down the St. Lawrence River after occupying Montreal. The approach of winter would put an end to active campaigning. Spring would bring up the St. Lawrence a powerful fleet and an army capable of recapturing whatever had been lost. If another American army succeeded in traversing the wilderness between Maine and New Brunswick, British regulars and militia would retreat on Halifax, which the Royal Navy could reinforce at any time of the year.

Such drastic action never had to be taken. What might have been necessary during the War of 1812 never became public knowledge. That war did demonstrate the importance of having naval control of the Great Lakes if Upper/<sup>Canada</sup> was to be defended successfully. In practice both sides ignored

the Rush-Bagot Agreement of 1817, whenever it suited them. The fortifications erected at the expense of British and American taxpayers further help to demolish the myth that there was an undefended frontier.

Eventually it became unthinkable that Americans and Canadians could seriously consider fighting each other, and uncertain that Great Britain could defeat on land a United States that had developed large and efficient armies as a consequence of its Civil War. Therefore Anglo-American differences were resolved by the Treaty of Washington in 1871, and British troops were withdrawn from everywhere except Halifax, where they remained until 1906 to protect the Royal Navy's base. Yet political situations can change overnight, so military plans long existed to send British troops back to Quebec, either via the St. Lawrence River from England or from Halifax over the Intercolonial Railway which was completed in 1876.

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