

for his impression of Belgrade, he replied: "Imagine a whole city illuminated with a 10-watt bulb." But the power of Yugoslavia is not to be measured by its wattage. "According to all rational calculations," A.J.P. Taylor has written, "Yugoslavia was the country most doomed to disintegrate in the storms of the twentieth century. It has few natural resources: little coal or iron and a territory largely composed of barren mountains . . . Historical traditions, though strong, work against unity, not in its favour." Whence, then, derives its power? From defiance — from defying Stalin and succeeding. "Yugoslavia has been living on the strength of this defiance ever since."

The elusiveness of power may be seen not only in its possession by those who, on "rational calculations", have no right to it but also in its lack by those who, on calculations no less rational, have every right to it. Here is the cry of S. John Peskett in *The Times*, who, with the rest of us, has seen the assumptions of geo-politics, like so many sandcastle Gibralters, washed away by the tide: "All the Queen's horses and all the Queen's men, plus the United States of America, the United Nations, NATO, and all the parachutists and glider troops we so busily train, cannot rescue a couple of hundred hostages and a few million pounds worth of aircraft from a handful of guerrillas half of whom are quarelling with the other."

### Relative to use

Power is pervasive, power is elusive. Power is also relative — relative not least to purpose. What you have of it depends on what you want to do with it.

The relativity of power is most simply illustrated by the distinction between the power to build and the power to destroy. The power to build — to create, to innovate, to improve — is hard to come by, arduous to exercise. It derives from resourceful diplomacy and nimble statecraft, sustained as these must be by a generous and patient citizenry. Rome was not built in a day; how much longer it takes to build a world free from poverty, ignorance, disease!

The power to destroy — to wreck, to frustrate, to sabotage — is, in contrast, easy to come by, effortless to exercise. Little is required to smash some cherished project, to bring things tumbling down — only a rifle with a telescopic sight, an assassin hired by the hour. "I'm as important as the start of World War One," bragged Arthur Bremer to his diary when in Ottawa to try to kill his President. "I just need the little opening and a second of time."

The power exerted by these demolition experts — the Tepermans, so to speak, of the global village — can be very great. But it is the kind of power a blackmailer exerts over a wealthy victim — potent while it lasts, but of short duration and likely to end unpleasantly for both of the. It is the power wielded by a pyromaniac in a fireworks factory. It is the power displayed by the President of Libya, threatening retaliation unless the UN Security Council voted to his liking — "Otherwise we shall see what we shall see. We shall do what Samson did: destroy the temple with everyone inside it, including ourselves. Europe should look out for the catastrophe which is lying in wait for it."

Such are the properties of power. Were they fixed

clearly in the minds of those who coined the expression "middle power" to describe Canada's place among the nations? I cannot prove it, but I doubt it.

### Obscurity preferred

For all that has been written about "Canada's role as a middle power" (and much has been written about it), its meaning remains obscure. Obscurity has, indeed, seemed preferable to clarity, Canadians resisting definition as an earlier generation resisted defining "Dominion status" for fear (as Lloyd George put it) of limiting their constitution "by too many finalities". "It is hard to say now precisely what a middle power is," John Holmes confessed in 1965; but that does not bother him. On the contrary: "I am all for accepting this ambiguity rather than insisting on a logical clarification." And again: "The more one tries to define (middle power), the more difficult and perhaps pretentious it appears to do so at all. Often it seems like describing the obvious. Definition spoils the special quality."

The origins of the term are as obscure as its meaning. If it was not used first in 1943, it was used first in 1944, for by 1945 "middle power" had come into widespread circulation. The year 1943 is when Canadians both in and out of government first gave thought to what their place in the postwar world might and ought to be. From the beginning, the prospect of divergence between that "might" and "ought" was both ominous and real. In 1943, Canada stood in the shadow of the United States and Britain. So long as a war remained to be won, such a position was not intolerable, might be construed as part of the Canadian war effort — unpleasant, but something to be put up with for the duration. But as a permanent stance for the postwar future it was out of the question, and Canadians began to say so.

Articulation of discontent was aroused by the threat of exclusion from the ruling circles of the first postwar international organizations. Word that Canada — of all countries — was to be left off the governing body of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency sent shocks of anger around the foreign policy community. "We are still trying to run a democracy" (so, with notable asperity, the Government, as quoted in the Pearson memoirs, instructed its agent in Washington charged with arguing his country's case) "and there is some historical evidence to support the thesis that democracies cannot be taxed without representation. We have tried to lead our people in a full-out effort for the war, and we had hoped that we could continue to lead them in such a way as to get their support behind the provision of relief and maintenance for battle-scarred Europe in the postwar years. We will not be able to secure their support for such a programme if it, as well as the economic affairs of the world generally, are to be run as a monopoly by the four Great Powers."

### United States crucial

Of the four great powers, the United States was crucial for the Canadian case. If Washington would not offer sympathy and support for the aspirations of its friendly neighbour, who else could? But Washington's response left much to be desired. Our status was but dimly recognized, our stature underrated.

In 1925, an eminent American professor of international politics had placed Canada in the category of "other