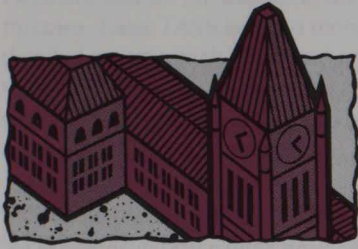


REPORT FROM THE HILL



Defence Issues and Press Comment

■ With the tabling in the House of Commons of the government's Defence White Paper, *Challenge and Commitment* on 5 June and the release of the New Democratic Party's response, "Canadian Sovereignty, Security and Defence" at the beginning of August, the media has been remarkably busy this summer covering defence issues. A sampling of newspaper comment shows some of the themes that ran through press reaction to evolving defence issues.

It was the submarines that attracted the most press attention. Montreal's *La Presse* of 10 June queried whether Canadian liberties were really at risk in the Arctic. Canada, it declared, should pressure the superpowers to find a way of guaranteeing these waters "a peaceful future." The *Toronto Star's* response was favourable, describing the document as "thoughtful but cautious" (6 June), though twitting the government on the lack of specifics on spending.

Both the *Montreal Gazette* (11 June) and the *Ottawa Citizen* (6 June) were largely favourable, the latter taking a slightly more critical line over the amount of notice paid to arms control in the White Paper: "the government should take great care that its military programs jibe with its arms control views." In its editorial following the White Paper's release, the *Globe and Mail* of 6 June worried about the imbalance the nuclear-powered submarines would create in the navy. The *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* of 6 June praised the new policy. Its editorial's only negative note was that the White Paper had said nothing about the "commitment and sacrifice this country got dur-

ing the lean years" from the members of the armed forces who worked and planned and trained in the "frustrated hope that one day a government would wake up."

Most newspapers supported the decision to drop the CAST brigade (Canadian air-sea transportable) commitment to north Norway in favour of consolidating our NATO forces in Germany. An exception was *Le Devoir* which, in a signed editorial entitled "Mission Impossible?" doubted whether we could defend our own north if the defence of Norway proved too difficult. It called the White Paper a long confession of weakness and incapacity to defend our frontiers. Another exception was the *Winnipeg Free Press* which said that the decision to end the CAST commitment to Norway was a "backing away from NATO." Its editorial of 9 June went on to say that "there is no indication that Canada intends to discover whether it has any greater capability to send troops to Germany" than it does to send them to Norway.

While most commentators agreed that Perrin Beatty, the Minister of National Defence, had done well in political terms, Jonathan Manthorpe of Southam News described in the *Ottawa Citizen* of 6 June the process of writing the White Paper as a major political and bureaucratic victory by Beatty over External Affairs Minister Joe Clark. Some columnists zeroed in on what they perceived as weaknesses in the policy itself. *Ottawa Citizen* columnist Marjorie Nichols observed on 9 June that the spending estimates provided by National Defence would fall short of the levels of the Trudeau years "as a percentage of budgetary spending, gross national product or annual after-inflation increments." Jocelyn Coulon suggested in *Le Devoir* (10 June) that the disengagement from Norway pointed to an eventual total withdrawal of Canadian forces from Europe. Europeans would realize

that, faced with mounting costs for home defence, Canada might well opt a few years from now to sever its commitment to the Central Front altogether.

The amount of media attention to the NDP's statement on defence policy reflected the rise in party fortunes (if polls and by-elections were any indication). However, judging by the overall tone of media response to the statement, historian Desmond Morton's prediction in a 20 July commentary for the *Toronto Star* – "Watch for the media to turn on the NDP" – appeared to be borne out by events.

Accusing it variously of "defeatism" (*Regina Leader-Post* 4 August), "neutrality" (*Toronto Star* 2 August), "naivete" (*Le Devoir* 4 August) and of being "Canada-centric at best, illusory and isolationist at worst" (*Globe and Mail* 3 August), a number of commentators nevertheless pointed to the NDP defence critic Derek Blackburn's commitment to military preparedness (the paper was issued under his name). Others speculated on the tension between him and the party's disarmament wing.

(See *Defence Notes* page 16 for an outline of the New Democratic Party statement.)

Central American Peacekeeping Advice

■ Following the announcement on 7 August of a peace plan signed by Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark sent two officials to convey to the foreign ministers of the five countries Canada's support for their plan and to reiterate our willingness to give technical advice on peacekeeping mechanisms, including verification and control.

Such advice would likely be given to an international verification commission that was created at a meeting in Caracas on 22-23 August consisting of the foreign ministers of thirteen states (the five Central American nations plus the *Contadora* group of

Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama and its support group of Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Uruguay) as well as representatives of the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

Senate Defence Committee

■ The Senate Special Committee on National Defence is continuing its tradition of in-depth studies of Canada's military capabilities. Currently, the Committee is pursuing a study of Canada's land forces with an October trip planned to view Canadian troops at first hand in Cyprus and Germany as well as hearings in the fall with DND officials and outside witnesses.

Southern Africa Trip

■ External Affairs Minister Joe Clark spent five days in mid-August visiting Ivory Coast, Zambia, Mozambique, and South Africa in preparation for the francophone and Commonwealth summits of heads of state in Canada in September (Quebec City) and October (Vancouver) respectively. Apartheid is expected to figure prominently on the agendas of both conferences. Mr. Clark met with the heads of state of each country but South Africa where he conferred with his counterpart, Foreign Minister Roelof (Pik) Botha. He also met officials of the African National Congress (ANC), at its headquarters-in-exile in Lusaka, Zambia and with leaders of the major legal anti-apartheid organization in South Africa, the United Democratic Front. It was the first official Canadian ministerial visit to Mozambique since it became independent from Portugal in 1975.

In a follow-up to Mr. Clark's trip, the President of the ANC, Oliver Tambo arrived in Canada on 26 August for meetings with Mr. Clark, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and other political leaders. □

- GREGORY WIRICK