

without weapons. Hitler now controlled all ports and shipyards of continental Europe from the North Cape to the Franco-Spanish border. Anxious governments and people in North America, as well as in Britain were asking, "Can Britain hold out?". If it could not, what would be the fate of the Royal Navy? Could it avoid capture or destruction? North America might well be the next target if Britain fell.

Fortunately, Britain was not over-run. The Royal Navy never lost control of the North Atlantic although control was gravely threatened from time to time, and no major attack was ever mounted against North American territory. But contingencies had to be guarded against. In a single fortnight in August and September three major agreements or understandings designed to counter the threat to North America were reached, at least in principle, between the governments concerned. The net strategic effect on Newfoundland was to transform it from a ward of the Royal Navy into a bastion for the defence of North America. The three agreements were:

- (1) a defence understanding between Canada and Newfoundland;
- (2) the Ogdensburg Declaration between Canada and the United States; and
- (3) the Leased Bases Agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom.

The Canada-Newfoundland Defence Accord

Canada moved first to assist Newfoundland. On June 14 a telegram was sent direct to the Governor of Newfoundland offering to station air and ground forces at the Newfoundland Airport (Gander). The offer was promptly accepted and in a matter of days a flight of RCAF reconnaissance planes had landed at Gander and a battalion of infantry had disembarked at Botwood and entrained for Gander.¹¹

These steps were taken without waiting for a formal agreement. In August, before President Roosevelt invited Prime Minister King to meet at Ogdensburg, Hon. C. G. Power, Canadian Minister of National Defence for Air, had arranged to meet with the Newfoundland Government in St. John's to consider joint defence arrangements. He was in Newfoundland when King was at Ogdensburg and his meeting with the Newfoundland Government took place on August 20.¹² At first the Canadian government seems to have been thinking in terms of a general defence agreement that would give Canada in principle complete control of defence matters, but the Commission of Government demurred at such a broad grant of power, although they were quite prepared to consider specific items. In fact no general defence agreement was worked out during the war, the two governments contenting themselves with arrangements to cover specific defence requirements as they arose. In the early stage most of the arrangements were worked out in bilateral conferences, the first of which was the meeting

¹¹ Documents 106-115.

¹² Pickersill, J. W. *The Mackenzie King Record*. Vol. I, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1960. p. 134-135.