

Northern Defense

CANADIAN defense forces are ahead of those of the United States in some phases, declares Ansel E. Talbot, a writer for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, who is impressed particularly with "a degree of inter-service co-operation still unknown in the United States." Talbot reached his conclusions after conversations with Major-Gen F. F. Worthington and Air Vice Marshal Ken Guthrie in Edmonton.

In at least one important particular Canadian leadership has won definite recognition: the system of air navigation perfected by Wing Commander Kenneth C. McClire, winner of the last annual award of the United States Institute of Navigation.

Main feature of Canada's far northern defense line is to be a radar screen whose function will be to detect approaching planes or missiles. The general plan involves, ultimately devising means for intercepting the planes and detonating the missiles. This, as General Carl Spaatz, chief of the U.S. Army Air Force, points out, involves "an air force in being, capable of immediate action with weapons second to none." To avoid misunderstandings it should be pointed out that neither Canada nor the United States has any such force "in being" in Northern Canada at the present time. The plan is in the initial stages of exploration and research.

Furthermore, it should be pointed out that Japan is only the third or fourth possible candidate for the doubtful honor of being the next aggressor against this continent. It is a habit of the military mind to do most of its peacetime thinking in terms of the last war. The Edmonton base and the installations to the

northwest of that point are useful for northern research "in the abstract," but as defenses are of little use against any power except Japan.

Any major air strike against this continent is likely to come from the northeast, not the northwest. For two reasons: the striking potential is in Europe, not the Far East, and the main targets are in Eastern Canada and Eastern United States. Should the time ever come when it is necessary to set up forward bases for the defense of this continent, Labrador and Greenland are likely to be more important sites than Alaska and the Canadian Northwest. Even if the enemy were so foolish as to make his first strike "through the back door" it would still be true that our counter-strikes could be more effective if launched against the more thickly populated and more highly industrialized western areas of the Eurasian "heartland." This will doubtless continue to be true until some Eurasian Great Power makes a satellite of Japan. Even then the Japanese-Manchurian industrial complex is likely to remain secondary in importance to the European.

It must be obvious, therefore, that the "general plan" in Northwest Canada is not a defense plan at all, but a research plan pure and simple. There is only one place in the world where similar studies could be carried out with less danger of causing alarm to other nations, and that is the South Polar region. Over-zealous attempts on the one hand, to make it appear mighty, and leftist protests on the other against the presence of "American forces" in northern Canada, are to be depreciated. There is an important difference between "defense" and "defense research" which it is well to bear in mind.

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