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'FUTURE PLAYS WILL DEPEND ON HOW THE NEXT ONE WORKS': FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT AND THE CANADIAN LEGATION DISCUSSIONS OF JANUARY 1938

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On 12 December 1937, Japanese aircraft sank the *USS Panay* near Nanking, China, killing several sailors. When the American Cabinet met five days later, Secretary of the Navy Claude Swanson made it quite clear that he "wants war and he wants it right away." Though a self-described pacifist, as Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes believed conflict with Japan was "inevitable sooner or later," he opined "isn't this the best possible time" with the Japanese mired in their war with China? But President Franklin Roosevelt "didn't want to have to go to war" to restrain Japan. Instead, he suggested an Anglo-American naval blockade to bring Japan "to her knees within a year." In his diary, Ickes averred he would not be "greatly surprised" if America was not already talking with Britain and France about restraining the "bandit" nations of Germany, Italy, and Japan.[1] Ickes was closer to the mark than he knew. Recalling that the Royal Navy and the United States Navy (USN) had undertaken staff conversations prior to 1917, the President had informed Britain's Ambassador on 16 December that he desired new naval staff talks. As Ronald Lindsay told the Foreign Office, Roosevelt backed an Anglo-American blockade that would cut off vital imported raw materials after Japan's "next grave outrage." Although Lindsay opposed a blockade, staff talks had appeal for Lindsay had proposed exchanging military information with Washington the

1. Diary, 18 December 1937, in Harold L. Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes. Volume II: The Inside Struggle, 1936-1939* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954), pp. 274-75.

previous March. Secretary of Foreign Affairs Anthony Eden told Lindsay on 20 December that Britain would "be delighted to receive the officer" selected by Roosevelt. Six days later, the USN's Captain Royal Ingersoll left for London to investigate naval cooperation if America and Britain had to confront Japan.[2]

Americans learned of this covert initiative in 1946 when Ingersoll attended a Congressional committee investigating the Pearl Harbor attack. Dorothy Borg, Ian Cowman, Waldo Heinrichs, David Reynolds, and Lawrence Pratt all discuss Ingersoll's mission.[3] But Roosevelt also sparked staff talks with Canada, an initiative those scholars do not mention. Robert Dallek's sweeping study of Roosevelt's foreign policy, which says little about Ingersoll, states simply that in December 1937 Roosevelt invited Canada's Prime Minister, W.L.M. King, to discuss world affairs. Strangely, Canadian historians ignore the Canadian-American staff talks held at Canada's Legation in Washington in January 1938. Although he quotes extensively from the Canadian minutes taken at that meeting, James Eayrs's analysis is sparse. Both Roger Sarty and John Meehan devote one paragraph each to the Legation talks, with Meehan describing the encounter as a "hapless episode" that accomplished nothing. Only Gregory

2. Ronald Lindsay to Anthony Eden, tels. 481, 482, & 483, December 1937, Foreign Office Records, United States Correspondence, FO371/20961, Public Record Office [PRO]; Lindsay to Eden, 22 March 1937, FO 371/20651, PRO; Eden to Lindsay, no. 616, 20th December 1937, Anthony Eden Official Papers, FO954/29A, PRO; and Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 497. But Eden also cautioned Britain's Cabinet "against taking too optimistic a view of any immediate action," though Roosevelt's attitude and attempt to mobilize American public opinion were "encouraging"; Cabinet Conclusions, 48(37), 22 December 1937, Cabinet Records, CAB23/90, PRO.

3. Royal Ingersoll testimony, 12 February 1946, Joint Committee of Congress on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack, 79th Congress, 1st Session in *Pearl Harbor Attack* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), pp. 4273-77. See also, Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938*, pp. 496-518; Ian Cowman, *Dominion or Decline: Anglo-American Naval Relations in the Pacific, 1937-1941* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp. 132-39; Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., "The Role of the United States Navy," in Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Okamoto, ed., *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations 1931-1941* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), pp. 213-15; David Reynolds, *The Creation of the Anglo-American Alliance 1937-1941: A Study in Competitive Co-operation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp. 16-19; and Lawrence Pratt, "The Anglo-American Naval Conversations on the Far East of January 1938," *International Affairs*, 47 (October 1971), pp. 745-63.

Johnson's fine unpublished doctoral dissertation devotes a few pages to the Legation discussions, although Johnson's emphasis lies with Pacific affairs rather than Canadian-American security relations generally.[4] My take on the Legation talks is markedly different. Far from hapless, that discussion may have constituted Roosevelt's attempt to create a Canadian-American defensive alliance. While the *Panay's* sinking provided Roosevelt with an immediate convenient rationale for pushing for talks with Canada, presidential interest in Canadian/continental security dated back to 1934, an interest that had intensified as the global situation had deteriorated. Unfortunately, as historians familiar with Roosevelt's machinations too well know – Roosevelt reputedly explained that his good humor at the inauguration of his presidential library had been prompted by the thought "of all the historians who will come here thinking that they'll find the answers to their questions"[5] – the President left no "smoking gun" document spelling out his true intent regarding Canada in 1937-38. However, the remarkable opposition to Roosevelt's Canadian initiative from King and the President's advisers suggest they feared Roosevelt's proposal could engender dangerous political consequences on both sides of the 49th parallel. Most importantly, a startling proposal made by the American army chief regarding British Columbia during the Legation talks strongly indicates that Roosevelt was pondering an unprecedented security deal, possibly a tacit alliance, with Canada.

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4. Robert Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 154-55; James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), pp. 180-82; Roger Sarty, *The Maritime Defence of Canada* (Toronto: The Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1996), pp. 101-02; John D. Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-41* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), p. 171; and Gregory Allan Johnson, *North Pacific Triangle? The Impact of the Far East on Canada and Its Relations with the United States and Great Britain, 1937-1948*, doctoral dissertation, York University, May 1989, pp. 110-15.
5. Franklin Roosevelt cited in John Charmley, *Churchill's Grand Alliance: The Anglo-American Special Relationship 1940-57* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1995), p. 11.

In June 1934 Roosevelt told Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles that the globe seemed to be "rapidly trending towards a continental policy," as Japan sought to dominate Asia, while Europe was re-instituting "a balance of power regime." Opining that "we here on this Continent must work out a continental understanding of identification of interests," Roosevelt felt Britain would "be left more or less out on a limb," desperately clinging to a few scattered possessions. Indeed, the President was willing to speed Britain's decline if necessary. When the British considered offering Japan some warship concessions in November 1934, Roosevelt instructed Norman Davis to impress, "in the most diplomatic way," that "if Great Britain is even suspected of preferring to play with Japan to playing with us, I shall be compelled, in the interest of American security, to approach public sentiment in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in a definite way to make those dominions understand clearly that their future security is linked with us in the United States." Davis obeyed, averring "that in the case of trouble with Japan, Canada as a practical matter would in fact become our hostage."[6] Britain quickly disavowed a naval deal with Japan. For James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt's threat to dismantle Britain's Empire to satisfy American security needs was "astonishing." British historian D.C. Watt is more sanguine. Imperial officials, long accustomed to American threats, simply believed that Roosevelt was pursuing a longstanding American goal to detach Canada from Britain.[7]

Roosevelt's promise to detach the dominions probably was a tactical ploy to stiffen British resolve. Still, presidential concern about Canada did not wane, especially

6. Sumner Welles memorandum, 14 June 1934, Sumner Welles Papers, box 149, file Roosevelt 1934, Franklin Roosevelt Library [FRL]; Roosevelt to Norman Davis, 9 November 1934, in Edgar B. Dixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs. Volume II: March 1934–August 1935* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1969), p. 263; and Davis to Roosevelt, 27 November 1934, Ibid., p. 291.

7. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1956), p. 250; and D.C. Watt, *Succeeding John Bull: America in Britain's Place 1900-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 78.

after the return to power of W.L.M. King in October 1935. For conservative Canadian historians, King's relationship with Roosevelt was disastrous. The "puppet" King's acquiescence to Roosevelt's August 1940 proposal to establish a Permanent Joint Board on Defense, Donald Creighton fumes, "effectively bound Canada to a continental system dominated by the United States." W.L. Morton harshly contends that King set the stage for "the present condition of Canada, in which the country is so irradiated by the American presence that it sickens and threatens to dissolve in cancerous slime."[8] King, who had studied at Harvard and the University of Chicago and worked for the Rockefellers as a labor mediator, viewed America sympathetically. Shortly after his election win, King sought out the American Minister to Canada, Norman Armour. Speaking fondly of his years in America, the Canadian leader preferred to take an "American road" rather than the British path in terms of trade. Morever, on economic and political issues, he and Canada "could be of great use as a link between Great Britain and the United States."[9]

King and Roosevelt did sign a reciprocity deal in November 1935, but on defense matters they rarely saw eye to eye. In late July 1936 Roosevelt met with King in Quebec City. In January the President had asserted the peoples in the Americas had to take "cognizance of growing ill-will, of marked trends towards aggression, of increasing armaments, of shortening tempers" in much of the world. Additionally, when an American diplomat had met Loring Christie of Canada's Department of External Affairs (DEA) in March, Christie had suggested Canada might support Britain in a war only if

8. Donald Creighton, *The Forked Road: Canada 1939-1957* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1976), pp. 43-44; and W.L. Morton, review of *William Lyon Mackenzie King. II: The Lonely Heights, 1924-1932*, in *Canadian Historical Review*, 45 (December 1964), pp. 320-21.

9. W.L.M. King diary, 24 & 25 October 1937, W.L.M. King Papers, Library & Archives of Canada [LAC]; and Norman Armour memorandum, 25 October 1935, Franklin Roosevelt Papers, President's Secretary's Files [PSF], box 25, file Canada: 1933-35, FRL.

Britain's survival "appeared to be menaced." In his public address at Quebec, Roosevelt drew cheers by commenting that Canadians and Americans did not see each other as foreigners, adding that the world's longest undefended border was an example "to the other Nations of the world." But in private, the President shocked King. Confiding that some American Senators, worried about British Columbia's vulnerability, favored occupying Canada's westernmost province if America went to war with Japan, Roosevelt wished to see a highway built across western Canada that could speed American soldiers to Alaska during a conflict with Japan. Roosevelt drove the point home on 14 August in Chautauqua, New York, when he asserted any nations wishing to harm the United States should "know that we can and will defend ourselves and defend our neighborhood."[10]

Likely Roosevelt had intended to spur Canada to do more to defend itself, thus reducing America's vulnerability on its northen frontier. It worked, though perhaps not exactly as Roosevelt had intended for some Canadian officials now thought they faced an American threat to Canadian sovereignty. On 30 June, a Canadian military intelligence report had reported "that the major military schemes and problems discussed at the [US Army] War College were all based on the general idea of a Far Eastern country making an attack on the United States by way of Canada."[11] Two months later, Colonel H.D.G. Crerar predicted that an American military flight to Alaska in 1934, USN and Japanese naval exercises in the Pacific, and the Alaskan Highway

10. Roosevelt cited in Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, p. 117; Loring Christie quoted in Pierre de la Boal memorandum, 18 March 1936, Welles Papers, box 25, file 7, FRL; diary, 31 July 1936, King Papers, LAC; Roosevelt cited in Stanley W. Dziuban, *Military Relations Between the United States and Canada 1939-1945* (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1959), p. 3.

11. "Militia and Air Force Confidential Intelligence Summary Volume XIV. Serial No. 3/36," 30 June 1936, Kardex file 112.3M1023 (D23), Directorate of History & Heritage, Department of National Defence [DHH]. American military plans regarding Canada are discussed in Richard A. Preston, *The Defence of the Undefended Border: Planning for War in North America, 1867-1939* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1977).

proposal were "distinct portents of a trend of events." If America and Japan clashed, Canada could side with America regardless of Britain's attitude, join an Anglo-American coalition against Japan, or remain neutral. But if Japan invaded British Columbia or used Canadian territory to attack American targets, Crerar cautioned that "American public opinion will demand what would amount to the military occupation of British Columbia by US forces." As existing forces were "incapable of ensuring anything approaching adequate supervision of the Western coast," the navy needed four new destroyers, the air force required 400 warplanes, while the army demanded coastal and anti-aircraft guns, 64 west coast observation posts, and six mechanized divisions, at a cost of $200 million over five years.[12]

Eayrs categorizes Crerar's appreciation as "among the key documents in Canadian history" thanks to its repudiation of isolationism and its claim that 1918 "was but an armistice." But Crerar's desire for a force that could fight at home *and* overseas fueled Christie's fear that the Canadian military's support for home defense masked its true goal to form an expeditionary force for European conflicts.[13] In this case, King, portrayed by Eayrs and C.P. Stacey as fundamentally anti-military, according to Sarty, proved to be "a more committed proponent of military expansion than anyone had suspected." Professing that his government would "have the least trouble" by meeting

12. Joint Staff Committee (JSC), "An Appreciation of the Defence Problems Confronting Canada with Recommendations for the Development of the Armed Forces, 5 September 1936, Kardex file 74/256, DHH.

13. Roger Sarty, "Mr. King and the Armed Forces," in Norman Hillmer et al., ed., *A Country of Limitations: Canada and the World in 1939* (Ottawa: Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1996), p. 217; diary, 5 August and 9-10 September 1936, King Papers, LAC; Ian Mackenzie to King plus Joint Service Chiefs to the Cabinet, "An Appreciation of the Defence Problems Confronting Canada with Recommendations for the Development of the Armed Forces," 16 November 1936, W.L.M. King Papers, Correspondence, vol. 221, file Mackenzie-1936; and C.P. Stacey, *Six Years of War: The Army in Canada, Britain and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1955), pp. 11-13. Stacey asserts that King's interest in military matters was so limited that he "would have understood those Chinese intellectuals, who, we are told, regard soldiers as an inferior race of beings whose proceedings deserve only the contempt of civilized men"; C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies. Volume 2: 1921-1948* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 275.

the situation "boldly," the Prime Minister told Cabinet on 5 August that coastal security had to be the priority and suggested formal neutrality legislation accompanied by "a defence program on [the] Atlantic and the Pacific, being certain that British protection means less and less, U.S. protection danger of losing our independence." Put off by the $200 million price tag, King stretched the program over ten years, while Minister of National Defence Ian Mackenzie slashed the first year's budget nearly in half. As those changes meant there was only enough money to fortify one coast (and none for an expeditionary force), the Cabinet and military agreed "[v]irtually without discussion" that the Pacific frontier, given their concerns about American intentions, would be strengthened.[14]

Roosevelt was not done with Canada, nor the worsening international situation generally. With Roosevelt's decisive re-election victory in November 1936, British Permanent Under-Secretary of State Robert Vansittart cautioned his political masters about mollifying dictators lest they "alienate Franklin Roosevelt the Second – who may be a person very different from Franklin Roosevelt the First." Historian Mark Lowenthal maintains the President entered his second term determined to experiment in foreign affairs, albeit in fits and starts. Although sympathetic, Burns contends that while Roosevelt demonstrated consistency in foreign policy principles, he "was captive to the political forces around him rather than their shaper," less a "great creative leader" than a "skillful manipulator and a brilliant interpreter." A more critical Frederick Marks declares that Roosevelt, lacking "any clearly defined strategy," campaigned publicly for collective

14. Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada*, p. 138; and Christie, "Memorandum on Defence Policy," 1 September 1936, Loring Christie Papers, vol. 27, file 9, LAC.

security while remaining a private appeaser.[15] 1937 did not start well for Roosevelt the Second. In January he pushed for legislation to ban arms sales to Spanish Civil War factions to buttress Anglo-French policies intended to prevent a general European war, a step that Dallek condemns as inflexible and unnecessary. Then in February the President advocated de-militarizing the Pacific. But that concept plus a notion to hold comprehensive talks regarding Europe's situation found little support in Britain, France, or Germany. Considering the Pacific neutrality plan premature, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain instead asked Roosevelt in March to amend American neutrality legislation which constituted "an indirect but potent encouragement aggression." Further, Lindsay's March 1937 proposal to exchange military intelligence, which built upon a suggestion made by the American naval attaché in London in March 1936 (almost certainly at Roosevelt's bequest), fizzled. Despite Vansittart's caution, many British officials regarded Roosevelt as an ineffectual meddler.[16]

King proved elusive too. In early March 1937, at Roosevelt's invitation, the Canadian leader ventured to Washington DC. Pleased to go, King hoped the President would convene a conference to address the threats posed by communism and fascism and head off a global conflict that would be far more "destructive of life and civilization" than the Great War. Roosevelt discussed his Pacific neutrality scheme, maintained he had no interest in a third term, and discussed the third neutrality act. But he again raised the Alaska Highway issue, asserting the $30 million route "would be of a great military advantage, in the event of trouble with Japan." Unable to justify that expenditure, a

15. Robert Vansittart memorandum, 16 December 1936, FO371/19787, PRO; Mark M. Lowenthal, "Roosevelt and the Coming of the War: The Search for United States Policy 1937-42," in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Second World War: Essays in Military and Political History* (London: Sage, 1982), pp. 50-51; Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*, p. 403; and Frederick W. Marks III, *Wind Over Sand: The Diplomacy of Franklin Roosevelt* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 267 & 277.
16. Chamberlain cited in Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt*, pp. 136-139; and Richard A. Harrison, "Testing the Water: A Secret Probe Towards Anglo-American Military Cooperation in 1936," *The International History Review*, 7 (May 1985), pp. 217-19.

defensive King contended that while some Canadians believed the Monroe Doctrine secured Canada's defense, "no self-respecting Government could countenance any such view." To King's considerable relief, Roosevelt's response was "significant." Maintaining that Canada's Atlantic seacoast was safe, the President noted "[w]hat we would like would be for Canada to have a few patrol boats on the Pacific Coast, and to see that her coast fortifications around Vancouver were of a character to be effective there."[17]

Roosevelt's comments were most welcome at the DEA. Both Christie and O.D. Skelton, the influential Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, had cautioned King that relying on the United States for security risked Canada becoming an American protectorate. Skelton – described by American diplomat Pierre de la Boal in 1934 "as a man who has always been a friend of the United States and an advocate of more confident relations with us"[18] – had told King that Canada should not rely on British or American assistance. While Canada could not "escape being affected by developments elsewhere," it was "still the most secure, the least exposed of all countries," a judgment the American army shared.[19] King too was pleased that Roosevelt had addressed British Columbia's security situation in such "a nice way and without in any way suggesting how Canada should handle her own affairs." That pleasure was tempered by caution though. In Britain in May 1937 to attend an imperial conference, King lobbied for

17. Diary, 5 March 1937, King Papers, LAC.
18. Boal to John D. Hickeson, 23 June 1934, Department of State Records, Decimal File 1930-39, RG59, file 811.2342/460, National Archives and Records Administration [NARA]. Skelton believed that Canada's security vis-a-vis America lay "in her own reasonableness, the decency of her neighbour, and the steady development of friendly intercourse, common standards of conduct, and common points of view"; Norman Hillmer, "The Anglo-Canadian Neurosis: The Case of O.D. Skelton," in Peter Lyon, ed., *Britain and Canada: Survey of a Changing Relationship* (London: Frank Cass, 1976), p. 76.
19. Christie, "Re Monroe Doctrine," 16 February 1937, in John A. Munro, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations: Volume 6. 1936-1939* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1972), p. 177; O.D. Skelton memorandum, February 1937, O.D. Skelton Papers, vol. 27, file 9, LAC; and Military Intelligence Division, "Canada: Political Estimate," 1 June 1937, RG59, Decimal File 1930-39, file 842.00/504, NARA.

Roosevelt's international conference notion, adding that Chamberlain should "try to make friends with America." But when Canada's Minister to the United States, Herbert Marler, had contended in December 1936 that Canada and America shared a common North American point of view, King had snapped him back. That sort of thinking "was all right up to a certain point," but it "should never be permitted to run counter to the advantages" Canada obtained from membership in Britain's Commonwealth. King was content to be a bridge between the two great Anglo-Saxon nations while Canada continued its modest rearmament program.[20]

But as Skelton bitterly remarked to an American visitor in late March 1937, a bridge was designed "to be walked on,"[21] and Canada soon heard the tread of some heavy boots after Japan attacked China in July 1937. Though Britain and America opposed Japan's aggression, Greg Kennedy says that neither possessed "either the will or the military power to return the Far East to its pre-July status quo." British overtures for joint mediation of the conflict were rejected by Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Fearful of antagonizing Japan or American isolationists, Roosevelt opposed making "identical representations" in favor of "cooperation on parallel but independent lines.[22] Canada wavered as its two greatest friends could not make common cause in Asia. King's government, Meehan asserts, fearing a broader war, emphasized non-intervention and opposed sanctions against Japan. However, when Canada dragged its feet when asked to endorse Hull's eight-point peace plan in July

20. Diary, 10 May 1937 and 1 December 1936, King Papers, LAC; and Armour memorandum, 5 March 1937, State Department Post Records, Ottawa, RG84, Entry 2195A, file 800, NARA.
21. Helen Moorhead to Raymond L. Buell, 22 March 1937, Raymond L. Buell Papers, box 10, file Moorhead, Helen Howard, Library of Congress [LC].
22. Greg Kennedy, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the Far East 1933-1939* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 232; and Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt*, p. 147.

1937, J. Pierrepont Moffat, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Western European Affairs, had Armour browbeat Skelton into signing on to Hull's initiative.[23]

At this vital juncture, Roosevelt's attention turned firmly towards Canada. On 4 August an exasperated Roosevelt told Hull that he was "eager" to build the Alaska Highway "as soon as possible." Hull reported that Canada had "unfortunately shown little inclination even to discuss the matter," the project's cost apparently being the stumbling block.[24] Armour, knowing that Roosevelt's patience was often limited, had an idea. On 2 September he suggested to Moffat that the President, set to visit Alaska later that month, should stop briefly in British Columbia to drive home the "solidarity existing between our own northwest and the stretch of territory separating Alaska from the continental United States." Certain the effect of such a presidential visit "would not be lost in certain important quarters," a week later Armour remade the case to Moffat, relaying that Canada's Governor General, Lord Tweedsmuir, felt the Alaska Highway would "have an enormous strategic and military importance." But Moffat's 14 September response made clear that neither the American army nor the USN "has the slightest interest in this matter." Moffat also feared that given high anti-Japanese feelings on the west coast, Canadians might misinterpret the rationale behind the stopover, especially given Roosevelt's desire for a military use for the Alaska Highway.[25] But when Armour called Moffat in Washington on 16 September, the answer was quite different. Hull, seeing "considerable merit" in Armour's proposal, had asked the President on 13

23. John D. Meehan, "Steering Clear of Britain: Canada's Debate over Collective Security in the Far Eastern Crisis of 1937," *The International History Review*, 25 (June 2003), pp. 253-81; and diary, 12 August 1937, J. Pierrepont Moffat Papers, vol. 39, Houghton Library, Harvard University [HL].
24. Roosevelt to Hull, 4 August 1937, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, box 73, file Hull, Cordell 1933-37, FRL; and Hull to Roosevelt, August 1937, Ibid.
25. Armour to Moffat, 2 September 1937, RG84, box 35, file 800.1 1937 Chief Executive, NARA; Armour to Moffat, 10 September 1937, Moffat Papers, vol. 12, HL; and Moffat to Armour, 14 September 1937, RG84, box 35, file 800.1 1937 Chief Executive, NARA.

September to make a stop. Thus, Moffat responded that the President "might decide to make the visit" to British Columbia.[26]

The President spent a few hours in Victoria on 30 September, met by Premier T.D. Pattullo, a keen highway advocate, and enthusiastic crowds. But hopes the visit might jog Canada to accept an Alaskan road proved illusory. Roosevelt's request for formal negotiations, dispatched in to King on 14 September, elicited a negative response. On 16 September Skelton told Armour that while Canada would consider the request, developing internal east-west communications ranked first. Only on 12 November did Ottawa relent slightly. Christie, worried that Roosevelt might reject Canada's position and eager to keep the matter on an "economic plane" rather than addressing military considerations, suggested a joint Canadian-American Alaska Highway feasibility study. However, if the Americans insisted on paying for the route, Christie reluctantly acknowledged Canadian military's objections to the project "presumably would have to be considered."[27]

Roosevelt's patience had run out. On 28 July Roosevelt had asked Chamberlain to visit Washington that autumn to discuss Anglo-American cooperation to promote global peace and economic stability. Chamberlain's 28 September response was cool. Though Asian events "justified our worst fears" and Chamberlain thought "we still seem to be a long way from the resumption of cordial relations" from the totalitarian states, he could not "suggest any way in which the meeting between us could be expedited."[28]

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26. Hull to Marvin McIntyre, 13 September 1937, Franklin Roosevelt Papers, Official Files, box 36, file OF200-ss Alaska and British Columbia, FRL; and Armour memorandum, "Telephone Conversation," 16 September 1937, RG84, box 35, file 800.1 1937 Chief Executive, NARA.
27. Armour to Skelton, no. 564, 14 September 1925, Department of External Affairs Records, RG25, vol. 1739, file 221, LAC; Skelton to Christie, 16 September 1937, Ibid.; and Christie memorandum, 12 November 1937, Ibid.
28. Roosevelt to Chamberlain, 28 July 1937, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, file Great Britain 1937-38, FRL; and Chamberlain to Roosevelt, 28 September 1937, Ibid.

Within a week of that blunt rejection, on 5 October in Chicago Roosevelt had issued his Quarantine Speech. Having hinted for months an intent to "make a dramatic statement" to rally support against the "three bandit nations" of Italy, Germany, and Japan, and urged by both Hull and Tweedsmuir to act, the President had urged "peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort" to oppose and quarantine countries which sought to create "a state of international anarchy and instability." But while Roosevelt's speech initially had drawn favorable responses at home, once criticism inevitably mounted, the President had declared he had been thinking only of a general treaty guaranteeing a "lasting peace," not a concrete program of political and military sanctions."[29] Historians debate Roosevelt's intent. For Richard Hofstadter and Charles Beard, the address revealed the President's shift away from isolationism. Dorothy Borg is less certain, arguing that Roosevelt, groping for a new policy after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese conflict, had hidden behind a "glittering" figure of speech. But Burns avers the speech was a "trial balloon" to test the public's mood; when the public response proved "unheroic," Roosevelt "pulled in his horns further."[30] Other practical test balloons were on the way. When the League of Nations announced on 6 October it would convene a Nine-Power conference in early November to discuss China, Roosevelt agreed to participate. But meeting with Hull, Welles, and Davis on 8 October, Roosevelt had warned that if mediation of the Sino-Japanese conflict failed, he would have to "consider

29. Roosevelt cited in Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt*, p. 148; Roosevelt, "Quarantine Address," 5 October 1937, in Daniel J. Boorstin, ed., *An American Primer* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 847-52; and John E. Wiltz, *From Isolation to War, 1931-1941* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968), p. 63. Tweesdmuir claimed the speech "was the culmination of a long conspiracy between him and Roosevelt; Tweedsmuir to Gilbert Murray, 8 October 1937, John Buchan Papers, box 9, file Correspondence October 1937, Queen's University Archives [QUA].

30. Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), pp. 446-47; Charles Beard, *American Foreign Policy in the Making, 1932-1940* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), pp. 190-91; Dorothy Borg, "Notes on Roosevelt's 'Quarantine Speech'," *Political Science Quarterly*, 72 (September 1972), pp. 405-07; and Burns, *The Lion and the Fox*, pp. 318-19.

taking further steps." Moreover, briefing Davis on 19 October, the President, still smarting from Chamberlain's rejection, had made two things clear: America would not take the lead in proposing action against Japan; and it could not "afford to be made, in popular opinion at home, a tail to the British kite."[31]

Roosevelt, however, took the lead with Canada, likely one of his further steps. Christie's warning that Roosevelt might reject Canada's position on the Alaska Highway was on the mark. Telling Armour on 9 November that his Victoria stopover had been a "great success," the President wanted to coordinate defense plans "for that important section of territory lying between northern Washington [state] and the 'panhandle' of Alaska." Describing British Columbia's fortifications as "not only entirely inadequate, but almost nonexistent," Roosevelt was not mollified by Armour's explanation that Canada was spending more on coastal defenses. Mentioning Anglo-American naval cooperation in the north Pacific during the Great War, Roosevelt thought that a USN officer should be sent to Ottawa to explore west coast security cooperation. Clearly taken aback, Armour convinced Roosevelt to let him sound out Ottawa first as "we would not, of course, wish to do anything that might embarrass Mr. King." Armour speedily met with Welles. If the matter proceeded, and Welles advised doing nothing until he had spoken to the President as the matter was "very delicate,"Armour suggested having King or Ian Mackenzie come to Washington to speak to Roosevelt or the State Department.[32]

Armour's careful choice to consult Welles was prudent, for the dour Welles, as John Lamberton Harper avers, "remained the president's confidant and able lieutenant until his downfall in 1943." Most importantly, Welles and other senior State Department

31. Roosevelt cited in Dallek, *Franklin Roosevelt*, pp. 149-51; and Roosevelt, "Notes of Conversation with Norman H. Davis," 19 October 1937, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, file State Department, Norman Davis, FRL.
32. Armour memorandum, 9 November 1937, RG84, box 33, file 800 1937 Political Affairs Defense & Foreign Policy, NARA.

members, including Moffat and Assistant Under Secretary of State Adolf Berle, were Anglophobes who practiced what Harper calls "Europhobic-Hemispherism." Berle, who had reluctantly taken up his State Department sinecure in late 1937, best explained this outlook. Berle had accepted the job lest it go "to some second-rate intriguer picked from the political basket who will get us in a British alliance and a European Asiatic war."[34] Welles, who told Berle on 2 December the only two presidential advisers "who amounted to anything" were Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau "and, of course, himself on foreign affairs," opposed speaking to Ottawa. Even after Armour added on 17 November that pre-existing local cooperation on the west coast between American and Canadian officers could be used to implement the President's concept, Welles was unmoved. Welles, Berle, and Moffat could not help but notice a dangerous confluence of events. The Nine-Power conference, which had ended on 24 November, had not created an Anglo-American consensus about how to meet the Japanese challenge, although Greg Kennedy maintains that neither the Americans nor the British offended "one another over the crisis: a feat of diplomatic trust, full of hope for future cooperation."[35]

Most dangerously, some key individuals sought to build on that hopeful promise. On 27 November, at Chamberlain's urging, Lindsay had approached Welles about initiating Anglo-American naval staff conversations and making "an overwhelming display of naval force" in the Pacific. Both Hull and Welles had politely declined on the

34. John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 60; and diary, 29 November 1937, Adolf Berle Papers, box 210, FRL. Ickes described Welles as a "man of almost preternatural solemnity and great dignity. If he ever smiles, it has not been in my presence. He conducts himself with portentous gravity and as if he were charged with all the responsibilities of Atlas. Just to look at him one can tell that the world would dissolve into its component parts if only a portion of the weighty secrets of state that carries about him were divulged"; diary, 2 April 1938, *The Inside Struggle*, p. 351.

35. Diary, 2 December 1937, Berle Papers, box 210, FRL; Armour to Welles, 17 November 1937, Welles Papers, box 161, file Canada, FRL; Welles to Armour, 29 November 1937, Ibid.; and Kennedy, *Anglo-American Relations and the Far East*, p. 238.

grounds that Britain was moving too hastily and America would have to provide the overwhelming display. Davis was pushing the "premise that the existence of the British Empire is essential to the national security of the United States and that while we should not follow Great Britain nevertheless we should not allow the Empire to be endangered," a premise Moffat had dismissed as ridiculous. Indeed, when Davis, groused in mid-November that Canada, which opposed sanctions against the revisionist dictatorships, sought to benefit from geography, imperial ties, and its friendship with America "without assuming any responsibilities," Moffat had uttered a heart-felt "three cheers for Canada."[36] Responding to Armour only on 29 November, Welles, indicating he had spoken to Hull about the matter, had opted not to talk to a "miserable" Roosevelt in advance of a presidential vacation later that week. As for Armour's suggestion that King could meet Roosevelt in Florida in early December, Welles doubted that would "be desirable." He did promise to raise the issue once Roosevelt had returned to Washington.[37]

Clearly Welles and his aides had concluded that any discussions with Canada, a British Dominion, could be used by Roosevelt's domestic foes to assert that the President sought a backdoor military deal with Britain. Indeed, they may well have feared that was exactly Roosevelt's intent. Armour, however, refused to let the Canadian initiative die, though he averred "this is not a matter which should be hurried."

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36. Welles memorandum of conversation with Lindsay, 27 November 1937, Welles Papers, box 162, file Great Britain 1936-1937, FRL; Pratt, "The Anglo-American Conversations," p. 749; and diary, 10 & 13 November 1937, Moffat Papers, vol. 39, HL. Chamberlain had told Tweedsmuir it was his intention "to encourage those sections of American opinion that seem to have welcomed the President's Chicago speech"; Chamberlain to Tweedsmuir, 19 November 1937, Buchan Papers, box 9, file Correspondence 1937, QUA.

37. Armour got the idea to piggyback any talks on existing west coast military arrangements from Robert Hale, a clerk in the American Legation in Ottawa. A Canadian military friend had told Hale that Canadian and American coastal artillery batteries surrounding the Straits of Juan de Fuca already were cooperating to guard that region; Robert Hale memorandum, 17 November 1937, Welles Papers, box 161, file Canada, FRL.

On 10 December he told Welles that Crerar had admitted that during a trip to Washington in late November to consult the British military attaché, the Canadian officer had met briefly with the American army head, General Malin Craig. Though Crerar had offered few details, Armour wondered if that meeting "may have been the first move in the direction suggested by the President," possibly at Roosevelt's direct instigation too. As Ottawa was a "small place" where even a handful of American officers in "mufti" would draw attention, Crerar had proposed sending one Canadian officer to Washington, perhaps using the cover of an invitation to attend a ship launching or a weapons test. While Armour thought Crerar's ideas were sound, nothing should be done until either King or Ian Mackenzie had spoken first to Roosevelt, Hull, or Welles. But when no response from Washington was forthcoming, on 17 December Armour again lobbied Welles, forwarding Canadian newspaper clippings that discussed British Columbia's new fortifications. As Canada was "at last awakening to the necessity of west coast defenses," Armour concluded "this would be as good a time as any" to carry out the military conversations demanded by the President.[38]

The *Panay's* sinking altered the equation dramatically. On 13 December the American Embassy in London reported that Britain was very interested in a "synchronized" Anglo-American response to Japanese actions in China, perhaps including moving the USN's Pacific fleet to Singapore. Berle believed that calls for greater Anglo-American cooperation, so reminiscent of British manipulations in 1915, were Davis's doing, while Moffat caustically noted a British tendency for "treating us as

38. Armour to Welles, 10 December 1937, Welles Papers, box 161, file Canada, FRL; and Armour to Welles, 17 December 1937, Welles Papers, box 149, file Roosevelt 1937, FRL. Crerar's account of his discussion with Armour is found in Crerar to the Chief of the General Staff, 13 December 1937, H.D.G. Crerar Papers, vol. 9, file D215, LAC. While Armour told Welles on 10 December that his chat with Crerar came up "quite naturally as a result of his [Crerar's] trip to Washington," Crerar claims Armour "drew me to one side, saying that he would like to talk to me, personally and confidentially, about a matter which was much in the President's mind, and, naturally, in his own."

their seventh dominion." So when Lindsay approached Welles on 15 December to broach means to restrain Japan, the Under Secretary's preference was for "concurrent or parallel action." One day later Roosevelt asked Lindsay for naval staff talks. Four days later Welles forwarded Armour's letter of 17 December to the President, tersely asking Roosevelt to "let me know what your desires may be." The President's response came on 23 December. Demanding the "matter should be definitely followed up," he wanted Canada to send army and navy officers to Washington to talk "off the record" with their American counterparts, with "nothing to be put in writing." Roosevelt, in fact, had moved first, asking King and his military advisers on 21 December to come to Washington early in the new year.[39]

But King did not wish to make the trip. This was not entirely unexpected for Armour had cautioned Welles on 10 December that King had declined to get together with Roosevelt in early December lest such a meeting damage sensitive ongoing Anglo-American trade discussions. On 30 December King politely deflected Roosevelt's request, again stating his concern about the trade talks being derailed by his presence in Washington.[40] Certainly King's political sensitivities were renowned, and he may have believed sincerely his being in Washington might prompt hinder trade negotiations. More probably, King feared that Roosevelt might ask him to do something politically dangerous. Reluctance to take action was typical of King, who informed British diplomat F.L.C Floud in 1938 "that his experience of political life had taught him that any success

39. United States Embassy London to Hull, no. 772, 13 December 1937, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, file Great Britain, FRL; diary, 30 November 1937, Berle Papers, box 210, FRL; diary, 13 December 1937, Moffat Papers, vol. 39, HL; Welles memorandum of conversation with Lindsay, 15 December 1937, Welles Papers, box 162, file Great Britain 1936-1937, FRL; Welles to Roosevelt, 20 December 1937, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, box 70, file State: 1937, FRL; Roosevelt to Welles, 22 December 1937, Ibid.; and Roosevelt to King, 21 December 1937, King Papers, Correspondence, reel C3729, LAC.

40. Armour to Welles, 10 December 1937, Welles Papers, box 161, file Canada, FRL; and King to Roosevelt, 30 December 1937, King Papers, Correspondence, reel C3729, LAC.

he had attained had been due far more to avoiding action rather than taking action." More specifically, given Roosevelt's comments about Canadian security since 1936, King must have feared he would be offered a deal he could not refuse, at least not easily. Canada's leader wanted little to do with the Chinese conflict. He had instructed Canada's delegation at the Nine-Power conference to decline positions of responsibility, to resist a united imperial front, and to avoid making any proposals. In his diary on 14 November, King had supported cutting Japan off from "credits & all forms of military assistance" but the question of restricting trade was another matter.[41]

But as with Welles, Armour was not inclined to let King off the hook. Visiting the Prime Minister on 7 January 1938, Armour patiently explained the President's desire to discuss the Pacific situation with King. Citing again his concerns about the trade talks and the impending opening of Canada's Parliament, slated for 27 January, King declined to visit Washington soon. Instead, he offered to come in the early spring. Ready for that evasion, Armour countered that Canada could send army and navy officers to converse with Craig and Admiral William Leahy, the Chief of Naval Operations, "without any publicity." Though King "expressed entire approval of the proposal" as the discussions "would be extremely useful," again he hedged. Sending Chief of the General Staff General E.C. Ashton and Commodore Percy Nelles was a possibility, but the Prime Minister declared "he was merely thinking out loud."[42]

Why did King tentatively agree to military discussions? His normally useful diary states only that King had shown Armour some of the correspondence he had shared

41. F.L.C. Floud to Harry Batterbee, 24 May 1938, Dominions Office Records, DO35/586, PRO; Johnson, *North Pacific Triangle?*, p. 100; and diary, 14 November 1937, King Papers, LAC.
42. Armour to Welles, 8 January 1938, RG59, Decimal File 1930-39, file 842.20/68, NARA.

with Roosevelt about Japan and the Pacific coast.[43] It is clear, however, that pressure was mounting on King to do something. On 6 January, in what Armour called "an extraordinary coincidence," Ottawa and Toronto newspapers carried articles discussing weak Canadian west coast defenses, American viewpoints on continental security, rumors of Anglo-American staff talks in London, and a belief that a joint Canadian-American west coast security plan was in the offing.[44] The press could be ignored, but Skelton and Canada's military were harder to brush aside. Dropping by Skelton's office on 10 January to pitch the staff talks, Armour found a sympathetic ear. As Norman Hillmer and Stephen Harris point out, Skelton consistently had opposed for years any joint planning between the DEA and Canada's military. He also had blocked forming a Canadian equivalent to Britain's Committee of Imperial Defence in the inter-war period. But Skelton saw "very great advantages" in exchanging information with the Americans, adding there "was much to be said for getting our defence programme on a realistic North American basis." Still, Skelton doubted the desirability "for such discussions to take place solely between technical defence officials." Second, the newspaper articles, which hinted America might re-fortify its border if Canada did not secure British Columbia, were problematic. While Armour asserted those articles "were, of course, without foundation," they complicated matters, although he added ominously things may have changed since Roosevelt had first intimated a desire for talks with Canada.[45]

43. Diary, 7 January 1938, King Papers, LAC.
44. Armour to Welles, 6 January 1938, Welles Papers, box 44, file 13, FRL; "Canadian Defence Weakness 'Menace' to U.S. Security," *The Ottawa Citizen*, 6 January 1938; "Joint Coastal Defense Plan Envisaged," *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 6 January 1938; "Three Experts See Invasion Just a Bogey," *Toronto Daily Star*, 6 January 1938; and "Defence Co-operation Between Britain, U.S. Suggested in London," *Toronto Daily Star*, 6 January 1938.
45. Norman Hillmer, "Defence and Ideology: The Anglo-Canadian Military 'Alliance' in the 1930s," in B.D. Hunt and R.G. Haycock, ed., *Canada's Defence: Perspectives on Policy in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1993), p. 87; Stephen J. Harris, "The Canadian General Staff and the Higher Organization of Defence, 1919-1939," in Hunt and Haycock,

Canada's military was happy to engage the Americans in conversations. This was a considerable turnaround from General A.G.L. McNaughton's term as Chief of the General Staff (1929-35). In March 1933 Canada's Joint Staff Committee, worried American might occupy British Columbia if Canada could not ward off hostile Japanese incursions, had advised a west coast defense buildup and planning for Canadian neutrality in any conflict between America and Japan. McNaughton had agreed, noting two weeks before that Canada could find itself "in an invidious and even dangerous position" if it could not adequately defend its neutrality against Japan or America. Thus, in 1934, when the American Army Air Corps had asked to overfly western Canada with ten bombers headed to Alaska, while Skelton had supported the flight, McNaughton had opposed the mission, only to see the Canadian government grant permission.[46] McNaughton, however, had left the military in 1935, and Ashton, while still cautious about American motives, wanted to see what was on the table. Having sent two officers to Washington in April 1937 to study American industrial mobilization strategies, Ashton told Ian Mackenzie on 10 January that if more talks with America occurred, he wanted definite assurances that Roosevelt "would safeguard Canada's situation and would not force her into a serious situation." But Ashton and Crerar had ulterior motives. The CGS had complained to Mackenzie and Crerar in late 1937 about "the frequent difficulties experienced by this Department in the pursuit of its approved objectives through obstruction or, at least, lack of sympathetic action elsewhere." Condemning the "ultra-

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Canada's Defence, p. 77; and Skelton, "Conversations on West Coast Defence," 10 January 1938, RG25, vol. 2959, file B-80, LAC.

46. JCS Sub-Committee, "The Maintenance of Canadian Neutrality in the event of war between Japan and the U.S.A," 10 March 1933, RG24, vol. 2692, file HQS5199-A, LAC; and A.G.L. McNaughton to Prime Minister R.B. Bennett, "Sino-Japanese Dispute: Possible Canadian Commitment to the Maintenance of Security," 24 February 1933, in Alex I. Inglis, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations: Volume 5. 1931-1935* (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1973), pp. 336-39. The 1934 overflight debate is described in Galen Roger Perras, *Franklin Roosevelt and the Origins of the Canadian-American Security Alliance, 1933-1945: Necessary But Not Necessary Enough* (Westport: Praeger, 1999), pp. 6-10.

isolationist" viewpoint that Canada need not fight at Britain's side, a clear attack on Skelton and Christie, Ashton believed such a policy "tantamount to an act of secession from the Commonwealth." Most importantly, a defenseless Canada would greatly concern the Americans. Crerar pulled fewer punches on 13 January. Enhanced security cooperation with America would "knock the feet from under" those subversive Canadian elements who opposed any military initiative on the grounds such action always resulted from British pressure.[47]

Such sentiments likely were not shared with Canada's Prime Minister, for on 13 January Armour told Welles that King would dispatch two officers to Washington to meet with their American counterparts at Canada's stylish Legation in Dupont Circle. Skelton and Welles retained concerns about the meeting. Canada had insisted on the discussions taking place at the Legation, Skelton told Marler, on 14 January, to ensure no "possibility of the slightest publicity" for the "secret and confidential" conversations. That same day, after informing the President of Canada's decision, Welles asked if Roosevelt wanted him to speak to Leahy and Craig "personally" about the projected meeting.[48] Welles's surrender on this issue had been hard won. Just days before, he had objected to Hull's proposal to hold joint USN-Royal Navy maneuvers that spring as joint exercises would prove unworkable unless they were so large as to indicate war was inevitable. Averring the American people would oppose close cooperation with Britain, Welles had pushed for an international conference with Europe's small powers to establish broad principles for the conduct of international relations. However, Hull

47. Ashton to Mackenzie, "The Defence of Canada: A Survey of Militia Requirements," 10 January 1938, Kardex file 114.1 D11, DHH; Ashton to Mackenzie, "Observations on Canada's Defence Policy," 14 October 1937, Kardex file 112.3M2009 (D27), DHH; Ashton to Crerar, 29 November 1937, RG24, vol. 2448, file HQC631-52-1, LAC; and Crerar to Col. W.W.T. Torr, 13 January 1938, Kardex file 000.8 (D3), DHH.

48. Skelton to Herbert Marler, 14 January 1938, RG25, vol. 2453, file Visits of General Ashton, LAC; and Welles to Roosevelt, 14 January 1938, RG59, Decimal File 1930-1939, file 842.20/68, NARA.

prevailed, and USN cruisers were ordered to ostentatiously stop at Singapore in mid-February for the official inauguration of the Royal Navy base there.[49]

Roosevelt does not appear to have responded to Welles's query regarding Leahy and Craig, at least in writing. Indeed, at this point, the American paper trail abruptly ceases. Roosevelt's declaration on 22 December that nothing be put in writing was firmly adhered to. The only reference in American archival records to the Legation discussions of 19-20 January 1938 is located in Leahy's diary held by the Library of Congress. It is hardly illuminating as Leahy noted only that he had "called at the Canadian Legation and had there an interesting talk with Dr. [sic] Ashton, Commodore P.N. Nelles, General Craig and General Embick." Fortunately, both Ashton and Nelles completed lengthy accounts of the discussions. Some awkwardness emerged before the meeting began on 19 January as Nelles, prompted by an Anglophile Marler, demanded that Britain's military and naval attachés in Washington be consulted. But when Ashton and Nelles insisted on meeting the Britons at the Legation, Craig balked as he "could not receive the British Military Attaché." After a quick telephone call to a reluctant Welles, the ground rules were firmly established. The Canadians could give the British any material they intended to present to Craig and Leahy. However, Welles insisted that only the American officers could pass over their information directly to the British.[50]

Asked by Craig to begin, Ashton responded uneasily that he and Nelles had arrived with no knowledge of potential topics and with authorization only from their

49. Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis*, pp. 510-11.
50. Diary, 19 January 1938, William Leahy Papers, box 2, reel 2, LC; Percy W. Nelles to MacKenzie, "Conversations held in Washington DC, on the 19th and 20th January 1938," 22 January 1938, W.L.M. King Papers, Memoranda & Notes, vol. 157, file F1411, LAC; Royal Air Force Attaché C.G. Pirie memorandum, 22 January 1938, Foreign Office Records, FO371/22107, PRO; and Johnson, *North Pacific Triangle?*, pp. 113-14.

government “to give and receive information, but to make no commitments.” Much of the tension dissipated when Craig said that while he had received “very limited instructions” as well, he was prepared to talk “soldier to soldier.” Craig then outlined American defensive efforts near Puget Sound and the Straits of Juan de Fuca, prompting Ashton to respond “in general terms” about plans for southern British Columbia. But then Craig stunned the Canadians. Offering to extend the American army’s operational coverage to Canada’s west coast, the American general asked if airfields in British Columbia could support American bomber planes. Stunned, Ashton tried to deflect any further questioning by explaining that Canada confronted three scenarios: an Anglo-Japanese war in east Asia that America might stay out of; Britain remaining neutral if America and Japan came to blows in the north Pacific; and Canada opting to join an Anglo-American conflict with Japan. Craig, however, confounded Ashton’s evasive tactics by replying that only the third option was relevant. Still, abandoning his startling operational offer, Craig focused on British Columbia’s landing fields and coastal defenses.[51] Any fears that Craig might revive that dangerous discussion quickly evaporated when Leahy took charge on 20 January. Although Craig painted a dark strategic picture, asserting that North America’s west coast could anticipate “very heavy” Japanese air attacks in “considerable force,” Leahy disagreed. Uninterested in British Columbia’s security circumstances, the admiral’s clear preoccupation was the USN’s plan to destroy Japan’s main battle fleet in the western Pacific. Compared to that monumentally complicated task, Leahy opined that Canada’s west coast security problem was “very minor.” Japanese forces might raid North

51. Ashton to Mackenzie, “Conversations held in Washington DC on the 19th and 20th January 1938,” 22 January 1938, Kardex file 112.3M2009 (D22), DHH.

America, possibly with aircraft carrier task groups, but such attacks would not presage invasion. Moreover, certain that Japanese military elements would not employ Canadian territory or waters to get at American targets, Leahy confidently asserted that any Japanese forces approaching Canada would disposed of with "no trouble." The American officers closed the conference with an assertion that they could offer no formal defense commitments to Canada, a statement the relieved Canadians did not dispute.[52]

Ashton and Nelles had found the conference confusing and alarming. They likely did not know that the American officers' contradictory comments about the Pacific situation reflected a bitter dispute between the American services about the USN's "Plan Orange" strategy to fight Japan in the western Pacific.[53] What they were sure of was that Craig's offer was politically dangerous. By 11 April Ashton's staff completed a long stalled Defence Scheme No. 2, a plan to ensure Canadian neutrality if America came to blows with Japan. Three days later the Joint Staff Committee (JSC) advised King's government to tread carefully if it spoke again to Roosevelt's administration about security issues. Extensive contacts with America could prove embarrassing if Britain remained apart from any American-Japanese conflict, a risk that hardly seemed commensurate with the minor and subservient role Canada could play in such a war. Asserting that Canada's Pacific strategy must not be seen in isolation from events elsewhere, the JSC suggested that Ottawa tell Washington that it could offer "no military

52. Nelles to Mackenzie, "Conversations...", 22 January 1938, King Papers, Memoranda & Notes, vol. 157, file F1411, LAC.
53. For analyses of the Plan Orange battle, see: Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991); and Brian McAllister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

commitments in advance of an actual crisis developing."[54] Curiously, although he had convinced his Cabinet on 11 January to buy two British destroyers for assignment to British Columbia, King devoted no space in his diary to west coast security until mid-March. Having read over Canadian military documents about neutrality, King "felt more strongly than ever how inadequate are Canada's defence forces, and how necessary it is for us to do something to preserve this country to future generations against nations that place all their reliance upon force."[55] In July 1938, intent on using Craig's comments to their advantage, Canada's defense chiefs suggested that as America's could safeguard British Columbia in a crisis, Canada's Atlantic coast defenses "should receive prior consideration" as Germany's menace "is now fully equal to, if not considerably greater than, that which exists on the Pacific." Certain such a policy would lead to Canadian involvement in another ruinous European conflagration, an enraged Christie demanded that Canada build up it air force and navy while stripping the army "to the bone, excepting those [units] designed for coast defence."[56]

Why did Craig offer to incorporate British Columbia into the American army's operational jurisdiction? Given Roosevelt's expressed concerns about the province's inadequate fortifications, the President must have ordered Craig to put forward the deal as it is unimaginable the American general would have done such a thing on his own. But there is no documentary evidence to support this argument, except the following. On 13 January 1938, in London, Captain Royal Ingersoll and Captain T.S.V Phillips of

54. "Defence Scheme No. 2. Plan for the Maintenance of Canadian Neutrality in the Event of a War between the United States and Japan," 11 April 1938, Kardex file 322.016 (D12), DHH; and JSC to Mackenzie, 14 April 1938, Kardex file 181.006 (D276), DHH.
55. Diary, 11 January 1938, King Papers, LAC; Armour to Hull, no. 1838, "Growing consciousness in Canada for need of defense," 13 January 1938, RG59, Decimal File 1930-1939, file 842.20/68, NARA; and diary, 12 March 1938, King Papers, LAC.
56. JSC, "A Review of Canada's Position with Respect to Defence, July 1938," 22 July 1938, Ian Mackenzie Papers, vol. 30, file X-50, LAC; and Christie to Skelton, Canadian Defence Policy," 24 June 1938, Skelton Papers, vol. 27, file 8, LAC.

the Royal Navy had signed a "Record of Conversation." If Britain and America established a distant blockade of Japan, the USN would "also assume the responsibility for the general Naval defence of the West Coast of Canada." Perhaps in the wake of that agreement, Roosevelt had wished to test Canada's willingness to accept American strategic direction. British officials in Washington were unsure. Lindsay thought the Legation talks indicated that the State Department "was making one more step towards cooperation with the British Empire." But Royal Air Force attaché C.G. Pirie was certain the Americans had tried simply to determine if Canada's defenses were adequate. If it was confirmed "they were less effective than their own," Pirie expected America to offer "to strengthen them in an emergency." Canada, the attaché correctly predicted, would accede "only if the British Empire were fighting alongside the U.S.A in a war against Japan."[57]

If the exact reasons behind Craig's operational offer remain murky, it also unclear why he so quickly jettisoned the idea when Ashton proved evasive. Three reasons present themselves. Gregory Johnson contends the American opposition to meeting with the British attachés at the Canadian Legation on 19 January stemmed from concerns the Canadians could learn of Ingersoll's despatch to Britain, which might then leak out to an isolationist Congress.[58] Indeed, there was a leak, and Roosevelt speedily distanced himself from the Ingersoll mission. On 27 January, the President ordered Leahy to say that Ingersoll had gone to Britain only to discuss warship tonnage rules allowed under the 1936 London Naval Agreement, not to converse about Anglo-

57. Captain Royal T. Ingersoll and Captain T.S.V. Phillips, "Record of Conversations," 13 January 1938, Admiralty Records, ADM116/3922, PRO; Lindsay to Eden, 26 January 1938, Foreign Office Records, FO371/22107, PRO; Pirie memorandum, 26 January 1938, Ibid.; and Johnson, *North Pacific Triangle?*, pp. 114-15.
58. Johnson, *North Pacific Triangle?*, p. 114.

American naval cooperation in the Pacific. Leahy also made it clear "the Navy has no thought of obtaining assistance from any other nation." Still, on 7 February Congressmen Louis Ludlow told Hull the press was implying "our [naval] expansion program is to be coordinated with British plans and policy."[59] Craig's refusal to raise the matter again with Ashton and Nelles likely was due to Roosevelt as well. It is possible the President had briefed Craig to back-peddle if he encountered concerted Canadian opposition or a clear reluctance to discuss the issue. Roosevelt too may have also intended only to send yet another blunt message to King about his continued concerns regarding Canadian defense in a manner designed to prompt action in Ottawa, If so, he succeeded, as the Canadian military's responses in 1938 clearly demonstrate.

In March 1938 Canada, unable to obtain badly needed weapons from traditional British suppliers, asked permission to inspect American-made warplanes and anti-aircraft guns. When American officials initially blocked that request on security grounds, Craig personally overrode those concerns, citing "the singular geographical relationship of Canada and the United States." Such contacts unnerved British authorities, especially when some Canadian officers involved in the meetings with the Americans offered few details when approached by the British High Commission in Ottawa in early 1939.[60] But most importantly, Roosevelt had not finished with Canada. Invited to dedicate a bridge spanning the St. Lawrence River between Ontario and New York in August 1938, the President used the event to warn Germany. Unhappy with strident German demands for territory from Czechoslovakia and declaring that his nation could

59. Stephen T. Early to Roosevelt, 28 January 1938, Franklin Roosevelt Papers, President's Personal File, file PPF5476, FRL; Leahy cited in Marler to King, no. 158, 9 February 1939, King Papers, Correspondence, vol. 254, file Mackenzie-Marler, reel C3736, LAC; and Louis Ludlow to Hull, 7 February 1938, RG59, Decimal Files 1930-39, file 711.41/379, NARA.
60. Craig to Welles, 19 March 1938, Welles Papers, box 161, file Canada, FRL; and Stephen L. Holmes to C.W. Dixon, 20 January 1939, Foreign Office Records, FO371/22821, PRO.

say no longer that "the eddies of controversy beyond the seas could bring no interest or no harm," Roosevelt averred "the people of the United States will not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil is threatened by any other empire."[61] Days later Roosevelt told Tweedsmuir that what he had said "was so obvious that I cannot understand why some American President did not say it half a century ago." Canadian newspapers praised this new Roosevelt Doctrine that spread the Monroe Doctrine northwards. But not everyone was so pleased. The *New York Times* acknowledged grateful Canadian responses to the speech, but paid more attention to Roosevelt's comments about a St. Lawrence River power generation treaty.[62] None of Roosevelt's aides apparently thought the President's assertion merited comment, although the opinion of Herbert Hoover's former Assistant Secretary State was scathing. Claiming that Roosevelt's "extremely unwise" speech had "struck me between the eyes," William Castle dismissed the President's claim that he had not broadened the Monroe Doctrine because its mandate had always included Canada. As Castle caustically noted, "even the infallible speech of a self-appointed divinity cannot make it mean such a thing."[63] King too was unnerved. Present at Roosevelt's speech, King had termed the President's comments "most significant," but he opposed any military reliance upon America. Two days later he delivered his own address which emphasized strongly that his government has "been putting our own means of defence in order," to make Canada "as immune from attack or possible invasion as we can reasonably expect to make it." When the Munich Crisis struck in September, a shaken King told his Cabinet that if Britain was "worsted in

61. Roosevelt, "Reciprocity in Defense," 18 August 1938, Skelton Papers, vol. 5, file 5-6, LAC.
62. Roosevelt to Tweedsmuir, 31 August 1938, Buchan Papers, box 10, file Correspondence July-August 1938, QUA; "The New 'Roosevelt Doctrine'," *Montreal Daily Star*, 18 August 1938; "Monroe to Roosevelt," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 20 August 1938; and John MacCormac, "President Aids King's Policies," *New York Times*, 19 August 1938.
63. Diary, 18 & 25 August 1938, William Castle Papers, Herbert Hoover Library.

a world struggle, the only future for Canada would be absorption by the U.S., if we are to be saved from an enemy aggressor."[64] Only the onset of World War Two and the disastrous collapse of France in the dark summer of 1940 would change King's mind about accepting American assistance, aid that Roosevelt was happy to offer at that point.

Did Roosevelt seek an "alliance" with Canada then in January 1938? It is not clear for Roosevelt's practices make it difficult to discern his true motives. In May 1942 the President told Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, that "you know I am a juggler, and I never let right hand know what my left hand does...I may have one policy for Europe and one diametrically opposite for North and South America. I may be entirely inconsistent, and furthermore I am perfectly willing to mislead and tell untruths if it will help to win the war." A more apt description of Roosevelt's policy formulation strategy came in his first months in the White House in 1933. Roosevelt had told the press he thought of himself as a quarterback in a football game. The quarterback, the President had stated, knows what the next play will be, but beyond that cannot predict or plan too rigidly because "future plays will depend on how the next one works."[65] In January 1938, Roosevelt designed a forward pass to a Canadian receiver, but when Canada's government seemed unwilling to run the route, the President changed the call at the line of scrimmage. But that play would be called again in August 1940, and this time the Canadian receiver was more than eager to catch the ball.

64. Diary, 18 & 25 August and 27 September 1938, King Papers, LAC;
65. Diary, 15 May 1942, Henry Morgenthau Papers, FRL; and Roosevelt quoted in Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition*, p. 431.