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Canada, the United States, and the Cuban Missile Crisis

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IN SPITE OF THE extensive literature on the Cuban missile confrontation, only passing attention has been paid to the impact of the crisis on America's allies.¹ Canada, the one country in the Western Hemisphere to share a close military alliance with the United States, was profoundly affected by the events of October 1962. Although Canadian involvement has been examined in some detail by observers of Canadian foreign policy,² new evidence—gleaned from presidential papers, recent memoirs, and oral history interviews—offers the basis for a reassessment of Canada's political and military response to the crisis and lends fresh insight into the dynamics of the United States-Canadian relationship.

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¹For example, the court narratives of Robert Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York); Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965); and Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York, 1965). Revisionist critiques include Leslie Dewart, "The Cuban Crisis Revisited," *Studies on the Left*, V (Spring 1965), 15-40; Louise Fitzsimmons, *The Kennedy Doctrine* (New York, 1972); Ronald Steel, *Imperialists and Other Heroes* (New York, 1971); Richard Walton, "The Cuban Missile Crisis," in *Cold War and Counter Revolution* (Baltimore, 1972), 103-143. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, 1971), offers an insightful analysis of the policy process. For a perceptive comment on the crisis management literature, see James A. Nathan, "The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now," *World Politics*, XXVIII (1975), 256-281.

²See especially Peyton Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs, 1961-1963* (Toronto, 1968) and Robert Reford, *Canada and Three Crises* (Lindsay, Ont., 1968).

Underlying Canadian-American interaction during the missile crisis were profoundly different perceptions of Fidel Castro's Cuba. To Canada, Cuba was remote and of negligible economic importance. No less anti-Communist than Americans, Canadians were more flexible and pragmatic in dealing with Communist governments. Heavily dependent on foreign trade, they had little use for economic sanctions and held the view that maintaining normal relations did not signify approval of a particular regime.³ Many Canadians also felt that they shared with Cuba the status of economic satellite to American industry.⁴ Hence they tended to view Castro's expropriations of United States property as the "legitimate efforts of a small economy to free itself from excessive foreign influence."⁵ Canadians further regarded American involvement in the Bay of Pigs fiasco as deplorable and condemned a presumed American right of forceful intervention as a means of blocking "communist penetration" of the hemisphere. Against the advice of his External Affairs Minister, Howard Green, Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker made a personal effort to offset public and parliamentary criticism of American participation in the Bay of Pigs invasion. At the same time, however, Diefenbaker sought American assurances that he would be informed of any future plans for "drastic action with respect to Cuba." In addition, External Affairs Minister Green cautioned Secretary of State Dean Rusk against further intervention "on the grounds that it would stir up a hornet's nest in Latin America . . . and

³According to a Gallup Poll published in the *Toronto Star*, January 30, 1963, the sale of nonstrategic goods to Communist countries was opposed by only 26% of the public. Approval was even more pronounced among elite groups. Businessmen were in favor by 88%, trade union leaders by 90%, and political leaders by 85% (John Paul and Jerome Laulich, *In Your Opinion* [Clarkson, Ont., 1963]). As Canada's Prime Minister later observed, "Canadian policy towards Cuba had the overwhelming support of Canadian public opinion and of Canada's press." John Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker*, Vol. 11: *The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962* (Toronto, 1976), 174.

⁴This view was expressed by an editorial in Canada's national magazine. See "Why We Won't Join the Blockade to Starve Castro Out of Cuba," *MacLean's*, LXXV (April 21, 1962), 2.

⁵Staff Summary Supplement, Dec. 22, 1960, White House Office, Staff Research Group Records, 1956-1961: State Department 861, Eisenhower Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kan.

not settle the problem in the long run."⁶

American officials were irritated at the lack of cooperation from Canada against what clearly seemed a threat to the entire hemisphere. They were particularly upset by Howard Green's public suggestion in May 1961, that Canada might help by mediating the Cuban-American dispute. Green had noted the nationalist rather than communist elements in the Cuban revolution, its irreversible quality, and the need for the United States to let Cubans choose their own form of government.⁷ President John F. Kennedy was personally "concerned" about Green's statements, for in the American view, they reflected a "distressing" inattention to the facts. Secretary Rusk, in Geneva concurrently with the External Affairs Minister, was directed to speak to Green in order to make him understand "what is really going on in Cuba."⁸ Americans were especially bitter at continued Canadian trade with Cuba. Although Canada cooperated in the American strategic embargo, sales of other items rose until the United States cut off Cuba's foreign exchange. Despite the consequent drop in Cuban-Canadian trade through 1962 and 1963, and regular assurances that no bootlegged or strategic goods were being exported, criticism of a perceived "fast buck" policy persisted in the American press and Congress. The Canadians, Dean Rusk complained, "have not been willing to sit down and develop a Canadian policy towards Cuba as a problem in this hemisphere."⁹

Misunderstanding clouded communication between Washington and Ottawa on the Cuban issue. Canadians might attribute it to ignorance and emotion in the United States, a former Canadian diplomat observed, but equally, he added, too many Canadians had given "the impression that we were

⁶Briefing paper, "The Cuban Situation," May 12, 1961, President's Office Files (hereinafter cited as POF): Countries—Canada Security, Kennedy Papers, John F. Kennedy Library, Waltham, Mass.

⁷*Washington Post*, May 12, 1961, clipping included with briefing papers in *ibid.*

⁸U.S. Dept. of State telegram from Acting Secretary Chester Bowles to Secretary Rusk, May 12, 1961, *ibid.*

⁹Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Canadian Affairs. "Transcript of Declassified Hearings Relating to Supplying of Nuclear Arms to the Canadian Forces," February 4, 1963, pp. 37-38; copy in Record Group 46, National Archives.

differing with the Americans out of prejudice and perversity. . . ."¹⁰ Neither country understood, realistically, the other's imperatives. Canadians thought the Americans had vastly overestimated and were seriously overreacting to Cuba's potential threat. Americans expected Canadians to cooperate in containing Cuban communism, because Canada was not only part of the Western Hemisphere, but part of an alliance system designed to contain Russian communism. Thus on the Cuba problem there had begun what Richard Neustadt calls the "spiral" effect of "muddled perceptions, stifled communications, and disappointed expectations."¹¹ These became consequential factors in determining political behavior patterns during the missile crisis.

President Kennedy expressed growing United States concern with the Russian build-up of Cuban military power on September 4, 1962, and reiterated it in a second statement on September 13. Noting the presence of antiaircraft defense missiles, Soviet-made torpedo boats, and Russian military technicians, Kennedy stated that there was no immediate evidence of a "significant offensive capability." Were this to change, however, the United States would "do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies."¹² Since the buildup was stated to be purely defensive, Canadians tended to view American fears as yet another exaggeration of the potential Cuban threat. It was also widely believed that Washington was being pushed into a more extreme position by Republicans campaigning in the off-year elections. In deeming congressional demands for invasion a case of "irresponsibility rampant," Toronto's *Financial Post* generally typified the Canadian reaction.¹³

On October 16, 1962, the President was shown aerial reconnaissance photographs which revealed what flight surveillance patterns had previously missed. The Russians were in the process of completing launching sites for MRBM's and IRBM's,

¹⁰John Holmes, "The Unequal Alliance: Canada and the United States," *Fourth Seminar on Canadian-American Relations* (Assumption University of Windsor, Nov. 8-10, 1962), 265.

¹¹*Alliance Politics* (New York, 1970), 56.

¹²*American Foreign Policy, Current Documents, 1962* (Washington, D.C., 1966), 369, 374.

¹³Sept. 22, 1962.

medium and intermediate-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching targets in Canada as well as in the United States and Latin America. With one exception, this intelligence was not imparted to the allies until October 22, after the Kennedy leadership had debated and decided upon a response. Through his close friend the British ambassador,¹⁴ Kennedy warned Prime Minister Harold Macmillan of the imminence of a crisis three days prior to informing the other allies. In addition, the day before sending personal emissaries to Paris, Rome, Bonn and Ottawa, Kennedy explained to Britain's Prime Minister his need to make unilateral decisions and offered, from that point on, the most intimate consultation. Immediately after his televised public announcement, Kennedy also telephoned Macmillan, the first of many calls through the duration of the crisis. No such explanations or offers or telephone calls were made to the Canadian Prime Minister, although the missiles were, in Macmillan's words, "a pistol pointed at America and Canada."¹⁵ In a message delivered to Diefenbaker just an hour and a half before his public broadcast, Kennedy said only that "we should all keep in close touch," and that "I will do all I can to keep you fully informed."¹⁶

To President DeGaulle, Kennedy sent Dean Acheson. To Prime Minister Diefenbaker, Kennedy sent the former United States ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant. Meeting with Diefenbaker late on the afternoon of October 22, Merchant thought that the Prime Minister behaved rather coolly towards him, a result perhaps of being "tired, harassed, and wrapped up in other things."¹⁷ In the message handed to him

¹⁴The Kennedy friendship with David Ormsby-Gore has been described as a "unique relationship between an Ambassador and a President with no parallel in modern times." David Nunnerley, *President Kennedy and Britain* (New York, 1972), 43.

¹⁵Harold Macmillan, *At the End of the Day, 1961-1963* (London, 1973), 184.

¹⁶Message from President Kennedy to Prime Minister Diefenbaker, Oct. 22, 1962, POF. Countries—Canada Security, Kennedy Papers.

¹⁷Interview with the Hon. Livingston Merchant, June 18, 1974. Diefenbaker's coolness may also have been dictated by his recent receipt of a letter from the President. Kennedy stated that he had learned, to his "distress," that Canada intended to support a new UN resolution calling for an unverified moratorium on nuclear tests. The Canadian vote, Kennedy wrote, "will be tantamount to Canada's abandoning the Western position" and "will be seen by the Soviet Union as a successful breach" of the West. Thus, if Canadians did not reconsider their vote, they would "damage, and damage seriously, the Western position on an essential issue of Western security" (U.S.

by Merchant, Diefenbaker was informed of the evidence of the installment of offensive Soviet missiles, of American quarantine measures in response, and of Kennedy's warning to Khrushchev. The longest part of the presidential communication, however, served notice of a resolution to be proposed by the Americans at an urgent meeting of the Security Council calling for withdrawal of the missiles under UN supervision in return for lifting the quarantine. Kennedy asked for Canadian support. This paragraph in the President's message was identical to the one sent to Macmillan, but it was not preceded, as in Macmillan's case, by a lengthy exposition on the dangers of the crisis or by offers of private discussion.¹⁸ In the much shorter note to Diefenbaker, therefore, it appears that the President was placing a greater emphasis on a solution through the United Nations. This emphasis on the UN, which fit in with the traditional Canadian instinct to turn to the world body in time of crisis, may help to explain why, as Merchant said afterwards, Diefenbaker "took the bloom off" his promise of Canada's support by stressing the role that the United Nations might play.¹⁹ On the other hand, the Prime Minister may merely have interpreted this part of the President's message to mean, as he later suggested, "that while I wanted a UN solution," Kennedy "wanted UN approval for the course of action he was initiating."²⁰

Diefenbaker's account of the meeting with Merchant differs substantially from the version offered by others who were present. All concur that the ambassador carried with him photographic evidence of the missile threat and an advance copy of the President's speech, but Diefenbaker claims that Merchant also asked the Canadians to "immediately and publicly place" their component of the continental defense force "on maximum alert." Merchant, to the contrary, later stated

Dept. of State telegram to American embassy, Ottawa, "Text of Letter from President to Prime Minister," Oct. 19, 1962, *ibid.* The letter was later chosen by Diefenbaker as an illustration of Kennedy's "extreme displeasure at our attempt to make an independent contribution to the search for world peace." *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker*, Vol. III: *The Tumultuous Years 1962-1967* (Toronto, 1977), 81.

¹⁸Macmillan, *End of the Day*, 185-187.

¹⁹Merchant interview, June 18, 1974.

²⁰Diefenbaker, *Memoirs*, III, 83.

that he put forth no requests of a military nature and Defence Minister Douglas Harkness, who attended the briefing along with External Affairs Minister Green, similarly noted that the ambassador had borne no specific demands for Canadian action.²¹ Indeed, Harkness insists that when he asked Merchant and the United States intelligence officers who accompanied him "a number of questions concerning the stages of alert which the United States forces would be put on and their timing, . . . the information the Americans had was hazy."²² Diefenbaker also claims that Canadians "were aware through intelligence channels that as of 16 October, the United States had satisfied itself" of the presence of the missiles, but Merchant observed that the Prime Minister gave no sign at their meeting of knowing anything about the buildup. Indeed, if Diefenbaker did have previous intelligence, it could only have been of the vaguest sort. Neither the Defence Minister, nor the Air Chief of Staff, nor the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff recall anything more than an indefinite sense of "something being up" which had filtered through the Canadian-American military network.²³ Finally, Merchant reported an incident which Diefenbaker does not mention in his memoirs—the Prime Minister's request that one sentence in the President's speech, characterizing Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko in unflattering terms, be deleted. The ambassador telephoned Dean Rusk, told him that he agreed with Diefenbaker's objection and had the offending phrase removed. Diefenbaker describes a different call to Washington. On learning of the requested "maximum alert" and on hearing "President Kennedy's demand that my government . . . give *carte blanche* in support of unilateral action by the United States . . . I telephoned the President." The Prime Minister states that he discussed his view of Khrushchev's intentions with Kennedy, as well as the merits of a UN solution, and that he complained about the lack of consultation

²¹Except where otherwise indicated, this sketch of the briefing session is based on the Merchant interview, June 18, 1974; interview with Lt.-Col. the Hon. Douglas Harkness, July 22, 1974; as well as Diefenbaker, *Memoirs*, III, 77-83. Howard Green was also interviewed, but his recollection of the encounter is vague.

²²"The Harkness Papers," *Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 22, 1977.

²³Harkness interview, July 22, 1974; interview with Air Marshal C. R. Dunlap, Oct. 24, 1974; interview with Air Marshal Frank Miller, Oct. 31, 1974.

with Canada. The President, according to Diefenbaker, was not responsive. "My government's policy with respect to Cuba," the Prime Minister added in lament, "had been an irritant in our relations . . . since my first meeting with Kennedy."²⁴

Following the Merchant briefing, the Prime Minister went home to eat dinner and watch Kennedy's address on television. Later that evening, in the House of Commons, he had little to say beyond urging calmness. "Our duty," he suggested, "is not to fan the flames of fear but to do our part to bring about relief from the tensions, the great tensions of the hour." He commented on only one of the seven points in the President's speech, namely the resolution to be placed before the United Nations. Canadians were determined, he said, that the UN "be charged at the earliest possible moment with this serious problem." He went on to propose that in order to obtain a "full and complete understanding of what is taking place in Cuba," the eight unaligned members of the UN disarmament committee make an on-site inspection. Leaders of the other parties echoed the Prime Minister's words.²⁵ None had any comment on the projected United States counteraction in the Caribbean. In Vancouver, the national leader of the New Democratic party repeated the obvious skepticism of statements in the House, but put his feeling in stronger terms. "Before we get too excited," he said, "we should remember that for fifteen years the Western powers have been ringing the Soviet Union with missile and air bases," and that "we have only the statements of the Americans" respecting the Soviet buildup.²⁶

The request for additional evidence about the existence of an offensive base was a reflection of Canada's particular perception of Cuba and the Cuban-American issue. National political leaders feared that the United States might once more be overreacting, while they also worried that it was not. To turn to the

²⁴*Memoirs*, III, 82–83. The White House log of telephone calls is not open to scholars and the receipt of this call cannot be verified. Diefenbaker's account, however, seems at variance with his earlier assertion that the President telephoned him at about 2 p.m. to ask for a Canadian forces alert (*Toronto Globe and Mail*, Oct. 28, 1967). Both his versions of a telephone call may have been a case of confusing what should have happened with what did happen. Diefenbaker's pride would have made it difficult for him to admit that he was so poorly informed before the Merchant visit, or that the request for an alert was actually made only through military channels.

²⁵Canada, House of Commons, *Debates* (Oct. 22, 1962), 805–807.

²⁶John T. Saywell, ed., *Canadian Annual Review for 1962* (Toronto, 1963), 128.

United Nations for assurance was a typical Canadian response. Canada had consistently supported the UN; Canadian statesmen had played a major role in strengthening it. The UN was one arena of world politics where the Canadians believed they could exert some influence. Prime Minister Diefenbaker shared his colleagues' faith in the UN, but unlike the heads of the other parties, he had seen photographic proof of the missile threat. However, he had been given little time to contemplate appropriate Canadian action and, called before Parliament, he had to make an immediate public statement. Stressing the role that the UN might play, therefore, was not only the natural Canadian response but probably seemed the wisest and safest course for the time being. Referring the matter to the UN, the Prime Minister later asserted, "would prevent any rash and hasty decision by the United States."²⁷

Meanwhile, through military channels, instructions requesting alert status for the Canadian component of NORAD—the North American Air Defense Command—had been received after the President's speech. Defence Minister Harkness was immediately informed by the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Chief Marshall Frank Miller, that the entire military apparatus of the United States had gone on "Defcon 3" alert,²⁸ and that the Canadian units in NORAD should be brought to the same state of readiness. Under the loosely phrased NORAD agreement, its commander, an American, was to "operate within a concept of air defence approved by the appropriate authorities" of the two governments. Further, "the plans and procedures to be followed by NORAD *in wartime* shall be formulated and approved in peacetime by appropriate national authorities and shall be capable of rapid implementation in an emergency." This vague terminology, confusing from the time of NORAD's inception in 1958 and not adequately clarified or properly defined in subsequent agreements, presented two problems: first, what procedure should be followed when a Defcon 3 alert had been proclaimed, a state of emergency *between* wartime and peacetime; and secondly, who

²⁷*Memoirs*, III, 79.

²⁸Defensive Condition 3 indicates very serious international tension. Defcon 5 is peacetime normal; Defcon 1 is imminent hostilities.

were the appropriate authorities?²⁹ According to the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff at the time NORAD was set up, an informal "agreed procedure" had been adopted suggesting that in the event of an alert, the President and the Prime Minister would consult about the "risks and repercussions" of recommended joint military proposals.³⁰ Harkness knew that in the case of the Cuban alert, this "agreed procedure" had not been implemented. Nevertheless, the Defence Minister understood that some action would have to be taken, so he asked Air Chief Marshall Miller to call an urgent meeting of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.³¹

Thus, while the Prime Minister focused on a UN resolution of the crisis before Parliament that evening, a gathering of quite another kind was taking place at the military level. Although the correct procedure to follow was open to question, Harkness and his senior military advisers were in immediate agreement on the necessity for an alert. They understood the fact stated in a briefing memorandum for President Kennedy in 1961 that "loss or diminution of U.S. use of Canadian air space and real estate and the contributions of the Canadian military, particularly the RCAF and Royal Canadian Navy, would be intolerable in time of crisis."³² Moreover, the degree of military integration between the United States and Canada dictated complete cooperation. Patterns of policy coordination and communality of interest demanded that the Canadian forces in NORAD be brought to equivalent status immediately. The question of who had the appropriate authority to implement an alert posed far more difficulty. Initially, the chairman

²⁹ *Canada Treaty Series 1958*, no. 9 (italics mine).

³⁰ Charles Foulkes, "The Complications of Continental Defence," in Livingston Merchant, ed., *Neighbors Taken for Granted* (New York, 1966), 121.

³¹ Except where footnotes indicate otherwise, the account of this meeting, which lasted until approximately 2 a.m. on October 23, has been put together from interviews with Harkness, Miller, Dunlap, and an interview with General G. Walsh (Chief of General Staff) on October 25, 1974. Harkness also talked about his actions on the evening of October 22 during the television broadcast "The Tenth Decade" (transcript available from the CBC) on November 24, 1971. He further discussed the crisis in a newspaper response to the publication of the Prime Minister's memoirs which contained a "somewhat different version of events." *Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 22, 1977.

³² Memorandum from Secretary of State Rusk for President Kennedy, Feb. 17, 1961, POF.

of the Chiefs thought he had the authority, because the alert was "low-level" and much like those he had approved during NORAD exercises. Harkness, however, was not so sure. On checking the Canadian War Books, the group found itself in a quandary. The old War Books, which were no longer in use, gave the authority to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. The new War Books, not yet approved by the Cabinet, gave it to the Defence Minister. Harkness decided therefore that he must consult Diefenbaker. Telling the Chiefs to "get ready," he left to confer with the Prime Minister, completely confident that the matter would be a mere formality. Diefenbaker, however, refused to give his permission for an alert until the Cabinet could meet and discuss the situation the next morning.

Believing that he had no other recourse, Harkness returned to the Chiefs of Staff meeting and authorized the alert on his own. Apart from a few minor details, such as an official announcement of the alert and the recall of men on leave which would, of course, have attracted the attention of both the public and the Prime Minister, all of the requirements were met.³³ The Canadian army, although not involved in NORAD, was also authorized to take whatever steps it could toward readiness "without putting the country in turmoil." According to General Walsh, Chief of General Staff, the most important step was to activate communications systems "so that we can go when necessary."³⁴ The Canadian navy presented special problems because of difficulties involved in mobilization. Ships are not as easily dispersed as aircraft, and they must not be caught in harbor. The Chief of Naval Staff, therefore, having received information through his own channels, acted on personal initiative and ordered the Atlantic fleet based in Halifax to ready for sea. In this case, it was necessary to recall men on shore leave, but other actions were specifically not taken for

³³ NORAD headquarters announced on January 1, 1963, that Canadian units had been on alert since the beginning of the crisis (*Globe and Mail*, Jan. 2, 1963). Of secondary accounts, only Reford, *Canada and Three Crises*, 178, correctly places the alert on the evening of October 22. His phrase, however, is that Harkness told the Chiefs "to put in action the necessary administrative preliminaries." Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 38-39, and Jon McLin, *Canada's Changing Defense Policy, 1957-1963* (Baltimore, 1967), 157, place Harkness's authorization on the following day, October 23.

³⁴ Walsh interview, Oct. 25, 1974.

fear of creating public alarm.³⁵ The naval alert was approved some hours later by the Defence Minister.³⁶

Most Canadians who took an interest in defense matters were well aware of the close cooperation of the Canadian and American air forces under the aegis of NORAD, but few noticed the extent of naval coordination under the cover of NATO.³⁷ The integration of the Atlantic fleet into SACLANT (Supreme Allied Command Atlantic)—a NATO command with headquarters at Norfolk, Virginia—meant that the Canadian navy had a role to play during the Cuban missile crisis, a role that has been either ignored or noted with only passing interest in standard accounts.³⁸ Rear Admiral Kenneth Dyer, who held the “triple-hatted” position of Atlantic Maritime Commander responsible to the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, Atlantic Flag Officer responsible to the Naval Chief, and most importantly, Canadian Atlantic Area Commander responsible to SACLANT’s Admiral Wright in Norfolk, proudly notes in his career resumé that “a major operational test of our effectiveness was achieved during the Cuban missile crisis when all available maritime forces were deployed at short notice in accordance with NATO plans.”³⁹

The deployment took the covering form of repeating a major exercise “with the errors corrected,” which SACLANT had just gone through a month before. That exercise had simulated a situation very like the actual Cuban crisis. “In effect,” Admiral Dyer stated, “we went to our war stations.” Canadian naval deployment involved the detection and tracking of Russian

³⁵For example, the recall of men on longer leave and evacuations. Interview with Rear Admiral Kenneth Dyer, Oct. 28, 1974.

³⁶Harkness interview, July 22, 1974.

³⁷One analyst attributes this not to differing judgements about the efficacy of the air and naval roles, “for there is little to choose between them,” but to the “less obtrusive character of maritime forces.” Peter C. Dobell, *Canada’s Search for New Roles: Foreign Policy in the Trudeau Era* (London, 1972), 26.

³⁸None of the accounts written from the U.S. point of view mention it. Of Canadian accounts, only Lyon and Reford comment. In a footnote, Lyon states that “in view of the steps the RCAF and RCN were taking,” Harkness’s answer to a question in the House concerning Canada’s military response was misleading. “The movement of RCN ships out of Halifax,” notes Lyon, “freed ships of the U.S. Navy to take up positions further south in the quarantine area.” *Canada in World Affairs*, 42. Reford makes a similar statement but neither source deals with the NATO implications. *Canada and Three Crises*, 213.

³⁹From a copy provided by Admiral Dyer.

submarines. A close eye was also kept on the Russian fishing fleet which was known to possess communication abilities, and which was regarded in time of crisis as a “potential menace.”⁴⁰ This activity in turn permitted units of the American navy to move south into the blockade zone. Given the central part played by the USN during the missile crisis, the Canadian contribution offered significant military support.

It is probably safe to conclude that Canada was the only power to activate forces committed to NATO in order to aid the Americans. Harold Macmillan, who at the time offered the strongest political support of all the allies, recorded his notes of a conversation on the evening of October 22 with General Lauris Norstad, NATO’s Supreme Commander:

Washington . . . [has] been urging a NATO “Alert,” with all that this implies (in our case, Royal Proclamation and call-up of Reservists), I told him that we would *not* repeat *not* agree at this stage. N. agreed with this, and said he thought NATO powers would take the same view. I said that “mobilisation” had sometimes caused war.

Macmillan added that “apart from certain precautions affecting the Royal Air Force, we maintained this position throughout the crisis.”⁴¹ The next day, October 23, Norstad came with the “good news that he had persuaded Washington to be more reasonable about mobilisation of NATO powers.” There was no need, as Macmillan later remarked, “to anticipate the horrors of nuclear warfare by observing all the traditional, almost ritual, preliminaries. . . .”⁴² In Canada’s case, however, and in the absence of higher policy directives, regularized patterns of policy coordination between the Canadian and American military led to the implementation of such preliminaries.⁴³ On the

⁴⁰In Parliamentary testimony, Canada’s Chief of Naval Staff stated that in 1962, the Russians had about 550 trawlers and supply vessels off the east coast at the peak of the fishing season. “The presence of a force of this size . . . must be considered a potential menace in time of crisis. . . . Some of these vessels are well equipped for the support or cover of a number of activities of a military nature.” Canada, House of Commons, Special Committee on Defence, *Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence* (July 29, 1963), 88.

⁴¹Macmillan, *End of the Day*, 190 (italics and indicated omissions Macmillan’s).

⁴²*Ibid.*, 195.

⁴³It is interesting to note that the same patterns of policy coordination in NORAD which dictate action without regard to political consequences were again in operation quite recently. On October 25, 1973, during the Yom Kippur War, the U.S. called a

evening of October 22, the Canadian military perceived and acted on a threat that was defined not by their own government, but by the transgovernmental group to which they felt much closer, the Canadian-American military.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, at the political level, Prime Minister Diefenbaker and his Cabinet were under the impression that the decision to support or not support the United States militarily still rested in their hands. The Cabinet met to discuss the situation twice on October 23 and again on October 24, but no decision ever emerged.⁴⁵ Secondary accounts have placed the blame for this outcome on Prime Minister Diefenbaker and to a lesser extent on External Affairs Minister Green. But these sources have paid insufficient attention to the divisions within the Cabinet and have misunderstood the reasons behind the government's hesitation. In believing that Canada's national security interests were best served by a rapid alignment with the Americans, these sources have tended to downplay other perceptions of those interests. One group within the Cabinet did agree immediately with Harkness that, given Canada's NORAD commitment and an apparent Russian threat to the entire continent, the nation's security interests could best be served by declaring an alert. But a second group, which included Diefenbaker and Green, felt those interests would be better served by avoiding any action that might appear provocative to the Soviet Union. Between these two groups lay approximately half the Cabinet who were uncertain about how

worldwide alert of its forces, including NORAD. The NORAD alert, in turn, necessarily involved Canadian participation. On the political level, Canada was neither consulted nor even informed. This time, the Defence Minister was not told of the alert until some hours after it had been implemented (*Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 20, 1973). The NORAD agreement was renegotiated in 1975 and modified to provide that Canadian forces would not go on alert at American command. *Montreal Gazette*, April 15, 1975.

⁴⁴Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye have recently drawn attention to the importance of transgovernmental activity in international relations—direct interaction between governmental subunits that is not controlled or closely guided by the policies of the respective national governments. "Transgovernmental Relations and International Organizations," *World Politics*, XXVII (Oct. 1974), 39–62. See also Roger Frank Swanson, "An Analytical Assessment of the United States—Canadian Defense Issue Area," *International Organization*, XXVII (Autumn 1974), 781–802.

⁴⁵Of the 21 ministers in the Cabinet in October 1962, 17 survive at the time of writing. One was in Nova Scotia during the crisis and was not called back to Ottawa. Of the 16 remaining, only 2 declined to be interviewed. The following account, except where otherwise indicated, has been constructed from interviews with all remaining ministers.

to proceed. Although these ministers later came to support Harkness, their varying degrees of resentment over the United States' failure to consult Canada initially strengthened the position enunciated by Diefenbaker and Green.

When the ministers gathered together on the morning of October 23, most knew only what they had seen on television or read in the newspapers. None of them, except the three ministers who had been briefed by Merchant, had seen the photographic evidence. Thus they were being asked to reach a decision concerning the advisability of supporting the Americans on the basis of essentially secondhand information. This information had to be fitted, moreover, into existing images of the Cuba-United States issue, images which centered on the belief that the Americans had been overestimating and overreacting to the Cuban threat. Diefenbaker further believed that Kennedy was "still smarting over the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco," and that "the President thought he had something to prove in his personal dealings with Khrushchev. . . ." Indeed, the Prime Minister considered Kennedy "perfectly capable of taking the world to the brink of thermonuclear destruction to prove himself the man for our times, a courageous champion of Western democracy."⁴⁶ Additional information through open channels of political communication might have revised negative attitudes, but the President never followed through on his implied promise of further contact. At no time during the crisis did Kennedy get in touch with Diefenbaker, or Rusk with Green, or even McNamara with Harkness. Communication was at the military level. The only U.S. official to speak to his Canadian counterpart was Maxwell Taylor, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who had one conversation with Frank Miller.⁴⁷ Miller was also in constant touch with the Americans at subordinate military levels through regular NORAD channels. The absence of communication at the political level, however, fed existing fears that the United States was too excitable and too quick on the trigger where Cuba was concerned.

⁴⁶Diefenbaker, *Memoirs*, III, 79–80.

⁴⁷Miller interview, Oct. 31, 1974.

A vital piece of new information, on the other hand, was received from a source outside the United States. Diefenbaker telephoned Harold Macmillan to find out what the reaction had been in Great Britain to the Cuban crisis. Macmillan told him that the United Kingdom had not gone on alert and would not, at this stage, since additional mobilization could easily be interpreted as a provocative measure by the Russians.⁴⁸ Macmillan's caution was an important consideration because it fit in with existing Canadian attitudes and interests, thereby making the presumed option of a nonalert seem even more attractive. One of these interests involved the government's nuclear dilemma. Approval of the alert could have meant that the United States would request the movement of nuclear-equipped interceptors to their bases in Canada, an action that would appear both provocative and perhaps compromise future government attempts to keep nuclear weapons off Canadian soil. A nonalert was also in keeping with the traditional Canadian attitude towards a crisis situation—that of attempting to avoid provocation, trying to settle the dispute in an amicable fashion, and taking the problem to the UN before endorsing unilateral action.⁴⁹ This approach had been voiced by the leaders of all national parties in the House of Commons after the President's speech, and it was one that had always won popular support. Given the uncertain status of his minority government, voter approval was certainly one of Diefenbaker's

⁴⁸In his memoirs, Diefenbaker does not mention communication with Macmillan, but Peter Stursburg, *Diefenbaker: Leadership Lost, 1962–1967* (Toronto, 1976), 16–17, offers two colorful accounts of the Prime Minister's conversation with his British counterpart, one by Cabinet minister R. A. Bell, and one by Conservative party organizer Dalton Camp. Lyon is dubious about the content of this phone call, and counters it with the statement that the British "had already taken a firm public position in favour of the American quarantine" (*Canada in World Affairs*, 38). Macmillan's memoirs now reveal, however, that this support was only political and that the British Prime Minister was strongly opposed to an alert and considered it provocative. In response to a query about the telephone call, Macmillan wrote that he was "not prepared to add anything to the statement I have already published in my books regarding the matter in which you are especially interested. I am sure you will understand." The Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan to the author, Dec. 10, 1974.

⁴⁹Reford calls this the "instinctive Canadian reaction, and examines it with respect to the crises of Quemoy and Matsu, Suez, and Cuba. In the latter case, he notes that Diefenbaker's actions were consistent with this pattern but argues that it was "pointless . . . to hesitate on the brink of support when there is no alternative to providing it. . . . Here is an occasion when it is better to swallow one's pride and fall in line" *Canada and Three Crises*, 243.

concerns if not one of the rest of the Cabinet, and the Prime Minister was sure that the majority of the electorate would not approve Kennedy's action or want to be militarily involved in the Cuban affair.⁵⁰

In his memoirs, Diefenbaker wrote that from the beginning of the crisis, "Khrushchev went out of his way to cultivate a moderate and reasonable image [and] . . . my colleagues and I had no intention of doing or saying anything that would add to the seriousness of the [situation]. . . ."⁵¹ The theme of non-provocation similarly runs through all of Diefenbaker's contemporary statements. It was also a constant in the responses of External Affairs Minister Green during a half-hour television interview on the evening of October 24. "We're trying," he said,

to keep the Canadian people and the people around Ottawa from getting all excited . . . and from panicking. I think it is essential that Canada should show some steadiness in this whole situation. And that's what is being done. . . . [T]he Government has been . . . keeping the people just as much informed as we possibly can do, and at the same time not endangering our defensive position and not making trouble abroad. . . . [W]e're going to do everything we can to get this crisis settled. . . . [W]e don't want a nuclear war.

A good part of the questioning in the interview was an attempt to elicit a satisfactory response about the degree of support Canada was offering the United States, but Green avoided any endorsement of Kennedy's blockade. He stated that he did not know what history would say about the President's action, "but that action has been taken now, and I think the important fact is what's done from now on."⁵²

A decision in favor of a nonalert would have eliminated not only the fear of provocation, but would also have satisfied a national interest that was becoming increasingly important—that of exercising the right to an independent foreign policy. The resentment of the majority of ministers at the American

⁵⁰Given the successful outcome of the blockade, Diefenbaker's judgment proved wrong. A poll taken in the first two weeks of November showed that 79.3% of Canadians approved Kennedy's action (*Globe and Mail*, Nov. 23, 1962). At the same time, in the U.S., approval of Kennedy's presidential performance climbed to "nearly 80%." Robert A. Divine, *The Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago, 1971), 58.

⁵¹Diefenbaker, *Memoirs*, III, 86.

⁵²From a transcript provided by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

failure to consult with them reflected their need to have Canadian sovereignty recognized and acted upon by the United States. Some were outraged at the American assumption that Canada would offer immediate and unqualified support no matter what the situation, but others would have been satisfied with at least the courtesy of token consultation. One minister reported that he was "boiling," another that he was "shocked," another simply that he "felt badly." The Minister of Fisheries thought that Canada should go along because it was "helpless to do otherwise."⁵³ Indeed, a Conservative member of Parliament reflected much Cabinet opinion when he subsequently commented that the crisis "underlined the lack of leverage and lack of importance of Canada in the world scene. We were not consulted. We were looking on as spectators watching a rather terrifying game unfold."⁵⁴

As the Cabinet debate wore on, international tension heightened. On October 23, the OAS approved the quarantine with only three countries abstaining from that section of the resolution which authorized OAS members to use force against Cuba. Early on Wednesday, October 24, the naval blockade went into effect and Russian ships were reported to be advancing steadily towards Cuba. The only new information available to measure the rapidly increasing danger, however, was channeled through the military network. On the one hand, this reinforced the opposition of those few with a preconceived distrust of the military.⁵⁵ On the other hand, it gave Harkness a distinct advantage in pressing his view on the majority. By the end of the third meeting on the morning of the 24th, three-fourths of the Cabinet had set other considerations aside and supported the Harkness position. As one former minister observed, "we had reason to resent the lack of consultation, but it would have been foolish not to temper it with an understanding of the situation."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, there did remain some opposition

⁵³However, he chalked up the lack of consultation to "incompetence rather than maliciousness." Interview with the Hon. J. Angus Maclean, Jan. 16, 1974. This view was echoed by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who borrowed a phrase from the women's movement and ascribed the failure to "a typical lack of consciousness-raising." Interview, New York, Dec. 20, 1973.

⁵⁴Interview with Frank McGee, in Stursburg, ed., *Leadership Lost*, 19-20.

⁵⁵Cabinet interviews.

⁵⁶Interview with the Hon. E. Davie Fulton, July 11, 1974.

and, as a result, no decision by the Cabinet was ever reached. External Affairs Minister Green never understood those who subsequently found fault with Cabinet behavior during the crisis. Reflecting on Cuba and the antialert faction over a decade later, Green said: "We were criticized for not helping, but we were deliberately playing it cool, and were sure that was Macmillan's attitude too."⁵⁷ It was hoped, as another minister explained, that "if Canada was not jumping to the Yankee tune, it might be the thing to prevent a holocaust. It was thought that the posture Canada struck would have importance. Who knows? Maybe the gesture helped Khrushchev to back off."⁵⁸

It has been argued that had Diefenbaker favored an alert, the Cabinet would have acquiesced.⁵⁹ It is also likely, however, that had the entire Cabinet initially favored an alert, Diefenbaker would have concurred. Indeed, the Prime Minister did eventually approve it on the basis of new information which he did not attempt to bring before his colleagues. Sometime on the afternoon of the 24th, Harkness received "a lot of intelligence on Russian preparations." It was also learned that Strategic Air Command and certain elements of United States naval forces had moved from a "Defcon 3" to a "Defcon 2" alert, indicating full war footing, just one step removed from actual hostilities. The Defence Minister tried once more to get the political authorization he wanted. This time he succeeded, for he convinced Diefenbaker that Canada's security was now gravely endangered by the preparations of the Soviet Union. With the American alert increased and actual hostilities apparently so imminent, the question of nonprovocation seemed less important than that of preparing for war. The Prime Minister told his Defence Minister to go ahead, but as Harkness later acknowledged, "I never told him that I had already done so."⁶⁰

Diefenbaker delayed formal proclamation of the alert until the next day, Thursday, October 25, when he announced it to the House of Commons. Meanwhile, during parliamentary

⁵⁷Interview with the Hon. Howard Green, July 9, 1974.

⁵⁸Interview with the Hon. Walter Dinsdale, Feb. 5, 1974.

⁵⁹Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 37.

⁶⁰Harkness interview, July 22, 1974. To this day, the Prime Minister rejects the idea of any authorization other than his own. "As to the popular notion that . . . Mr. Harkness, under the influence of the Canadian military and the United States Pentagon,

question periods the previous two days, government spokesmen had adroitly circumvented any lengthy discussion of Canadian response to the crisis. Harkness later admitted that he had "very carefully" phrased his answers to opposition queries.⁶¹ When asked by the Liberal Party defense critic on October 23 if Canadian units assigned to NORAD had been alerted, or if "special orders" had been transmitted to naval units, Harkness replied that "by and large the answer to that question is no." The Defence Minister also denied on October 24 that Canada was taking any part in the quarantine.

These answers were, of course, misleading, but technically correct. All of the steps included in an alert had not been authorized and the alert had not been officially proclaimed. Naval units were not under special orders, nor were they actually blockading Russian ships—they were merely repeating a NATO exercise. On the other hand, when asked if Canada had defaulted on its NORAD agreement, Harkness could truthfully say "emphatically no, we have not defaulted." Opposition members were also pressing the Prime Minister for information. One plea for assurance that the government was "doing everything possible to halt this race toward international suicide" was ruled out of order, but to other requests for information, Diefenbaker responded by asking for restraint. "Were we to place before the House various matters that might be spoken of at this time," he suggested, "it would not benefit Canada's security situation, . . . and might indeed be provocative."⁶²

In proclaiming the alert to the Commons on October 25, the Prime Minister conceded the arguments of the Harkness group, accusing the Soviet Union of reaching out across the Atlantic "to challenge the right of free men to live in peace in this hemisphere." He declared the weapons in Cuba "a direct and immediate menace to Canada . . . and indeed to all the free world, whose security depends to such an extent upon the

engaged in a clandestine authorization of a full alert on 22 October, I do not believe it to be true." *Memoirs*, III, 88.

⁶¹Harkness interview, July 22, 1974.

⁶²The government statements cited above are all from *Debates* (Oct. 23, 1962), 882; (Oct. 24, 1962), 883–885.

strategic strength of the United States." In light of the "new and immediate threat" posed by the Soviet Union to the security of the continent, Diefenbaker dismissed arguments over the legality of the quarantine as "largely sterile and irrelevant." "We have a situation to face," he emphasized. In order to deal with that situation, he announced that "all Canadian military forces have taken precautionary measures" and that NORAD's Canadian component had "been placed upon the same level of readiness" as the forces of the United States. It was later made clear, however, that the same level of readiness did not mean that Canada's weapons systems had been nuclear armed.

Observing then the arguments of that group in the Cabinet who had opposed the alert, the Prime Minister made the following statement:

It has been necessary and will always remain necessary to weigh the risks of both action and inaction in such circumstances. . . . Canadians stand by their allies and their undertakings, and we intend in the present crisis to do the same. On the other hand, we shall not fail to do everything possible to seek solutions to these problems without war. We shall seek to avoid provocative action. Our purpose will be to do everything to reduce tension.

Taking encouragement from the fact that some Soviet ships had turned back from Cuba, Diefenbaker still cautioned that "it would be dangerously premature to assume that the critical phase" had passed. Returning to the basic theme of his statement on October 22, he stated that the "greatest hope" of finding a peaceful solution lay in the United Nations. While avoiding any expression of personal confidence in American leadership, Diefenbaker praised U Thant both for the way he was discharging his responsibilities and for his proposal of a standstill which would permit time for negotiation. Opposition Leader Lester Pearson, in concert with the heads of the smaller parties, spoke even more intensely of a debt to the United Nations and was less supportive than Diefenbaker had been of the quarantine as a security measure. Backing the United States, he suggested, did not necessarily mean that "all the

details of that action are to be approved without qualification." Canada, he added:

can be grateful indeed that the United Nations has been called into action at this time . . . [,] grateful that . . . they are working, talking and negotiating to solve this problem . . . [and] grateful, as we have had cause to be grateful in the past, that with all its weaknesses . . . the world organization is in existence today, and stands between humanity and destruction.⁶³

Criticism of the government's failure to declare an immediate alert and stand forthrightly beside the United States emerged in the aftermath of Green's television appearance and accelerated as the crisis subsided. The censure became widespread and even extended to the ranks of Diefenbaker's Conservative party. Charges of weakness, evasion, and "sluggish reaction" appeared in the press.⁶⁴ Government spokesmen in the United States, however, quickly voiced their complete satisfaction with Canadian cooperation during the missile crisis. It has been suggested that they did so "in order to avoid weakening the facade of allied solidarity,"⁶⁵ but the more likely explanation is that they knew they had no grounds for complaint. The Kennedy administration was undoubtedly disappointed at the level of political response, but that response had exposed no weakness and posed no threat to national security interests. They may also have realized that they too were vulnerable to criticism. The informal "agreed procedure" providing for presidential-prime ministerial consultation in the event of a NORAD alert had not been followed.

The success of Kennedy's action in forcing Khrushchev to back down was widely lauded both in Canada and abroad. As General Norstad told the President in a letter written from NATO headquarters, "the outcome of the Cuban crisis is being

⁶³*Ibid.* (Oct. 25, 1962), 911–917.

⁶⁴See, for example, the Toronto *Financial Post*, Nov. 3, 1962; see also "Canada: Defensive Gap," *Time*, LXXX (Nov. 9, 1962), 41; and Warner Troyer, "We Flunked the NORAD Test," *Commentator*, VI (Dec., 1962), 6–7. The idea that Canada failed militarily to back, immediately, the United States lingers on. See, for instance, Howard Lentner, "Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Case of Canada and Nuclear Weapons," *World Politics*, XXIX (Oct. 1976), 32.

⁶⁵Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 55.

hailed with great enthusiasm. . . . It is regarded as a great achievement for the West . . . and is considered a great success for you personally. . . . You have established yourself with friend and foe alike as a strong leader at a time when strong leadership is sorely needed."⁶⁶ Such sentiment left Diefenbaker with the lack of consultation and its consequent infringement of Canadian sovereignty as the only possible public justification for delay. Three months after the crisis, he exclaimed before the House of Commons:

How could you act at the same time as your partner acted if you had no knowledge beyond an hour and a half prior to the speech. . . . We acted immediately. The United States knew in advance what course she was going to follow and had . . . arrangements made in advance. We as a partner in NORAD had no knowledge.⁶⁷

Even years later, when Diefenbaker was out of power, he remained defensive and irritated. "We took the stand in 1962," he declared, that we should ask the United States "to act with that restraint with which power that is overwhelming can always act." To say "whatever or wherever you lead we follow" was no policy for Canada.⁶⁸ "We were not," he complained in his memoirs, "a satellite state at the beck and call of an imperial master."⁶⁹ In view of the American triumph, the Prime Minister was not able to explain Cabinet hesitation on the basis of another aspect of the truth—that a segment of Canada's political leadership had perceived the nation's security interests to be best served by avoiding any action that might seem provocative to Khrushchev. Force had clearly won the day. Although a decision in favor of a nonmilitary response would have fit in with existing attitudes and interests, critics would still

⁶⁶General Lauris Norstad to President Kennedy, Nov. 1, 1962, POF, NATO-Norstad Correspondence.

⁶⁷*Debates* (Jan. 25, 1963), 3127.

⁶⁸*Ibid.* (March 8, 1965), 12067. Lyon, *Canada in World Affairs*, 57, 62, compares Diefenbaker's reaction with that of DeGaulle, noting that the French President readily accepted the American explanation and offered immediate support. Lyon does not mention, however, that three years later one of the reasons behind DeGaulle's request to have NATO bases in France removed was the lack of consultation during the missile crisis.

⁶⁹*Memoirs*, III, 82.

have viewed even the existence of an inconclusive two-day debate on the alert as a serious error in judgment. It was an embarrassment a minority government could not afford.

Of those in the Cabinet who opposed an alert, Howard Green was the only minister not to decry the lack of consultation, noting subsequently that the United States "could not have done otherwise—there were too many allies."⁷⁰ In point of fact, the United States did not consult Canada because it was assumed that the Canadian government, as a political-military unit, would view its national security interests as identical to those of the United States and would therefore act to safeguard them by automatically supporting the American position. A summary of the foreign press response to the blockade, found in President Kennedy's office files, makes it clear that a differing perception was not expected from the Canadians. The nine-page resumé covers the press reaction of Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East but does not mention a single Canadian newspaper.⁷¹

It is no doubt true, as I. F. Stone has suggested, that the United States did not confer with its allies because "to consult was to invite advice we did not wish to hear."⁷² "We did not want," Dean Rusk later observed, "multilateral management of the Cuba crisis."⁷³ Clearly, the requirements of speed and secrecy were also a factor. But given the fact that Canada was the only country in the Western Hemisphere to share a close military alliance with the United States, consultation was imperative. The military integration of the two countries meant that Canada was inevitably involved, but the President and his advisors ignored this, and made no attempt to deal with the complications of integration at the political level. Absorbed in their own concerns, they believed that a personal presidential message and photographs of the missile sites would suffice.

⁷⁰Green interview. Secondary accounts agree with Green. Reford, *Canada and Three Crises*, 213, laments the lack of consultation but states that "Canada's special position was recognized," and Canada "was given as favourable consideration as the other major powers of the Atlantic alliance."

⁷¹USIA Summary of Foreign Press, Oct. 23, 1962, POF: Countries—Cuba, Kennedy Papers.

⁷²"What Price Prestige," in Divine, *Missile Crisis*, 162.

⁷³Interview with Dean Rusk, Dec. 29, 1975.

There was to be no opportunity for the Canadians to offer their own view of the wisest response, or to be persuaded of the American one. The diplomatic channels were blocked, such that even the token consultation given Macmillan was denied. There was no intimacy between the President and the Canadian ambassador as there was between Kennedy and his friend the British envoy. Indeed, the President's disdain for and contempt of the Prime Minister completely precluded the kind of communication Kennedy had with Macmillan.⁷⁴

In spite of this, Kennedy and his advisors expected that given the measure of the threat, Canada would offer full and immediate support. In face of the same threat, Diefenbaker and most of his Cabinet had expected consultation. These expectations were not fulfilled and the resulting disappointments provoked a further response accelerating the spiral of misunderstanding. Canadians wondered what had happened to their special relationship, and Diefenbaker became convinced that the President intended to push him and Canada around. Americans wondered what had become of their steadfast ally, and Kennedy, with his administration, became even more certain that harmonious relations with Canada would only be possible once Diefenbaker was out of office.

Canada, the only NATO ally to back the United States militarily, yet ironically criticized for insufficient support, suffered other repercussions as a result of the missile crisis. In the next months, the government was subjected to increasing pressures from domestic sources and from outside Canada to come to a decision on nuclear arms. The impotence of Canada's weapons systems during the crisis came as a shock to many Canadians who had not previously focused on the nuclear issue. The crisis also seriously damaged the credibility of Diefenbaker's promise that nuclear warheads, while shunned in peacetime, would be made quickly available in time of war. The missile crisis, by dramatically centering the attention of the populace of the state of Canada's defenses, rigorously tested

⁷⁴Kennedy's attitude towards the Prime Minister was frankly summed up in this comment to a friend: "I didn't think Diefenbaker was a son of a bitch. (Pause, for effect.) I thought he was a prick." Benjamin C. Bradlee, *Conversations with Kennedy* (New York, 1975), 183.

the reality of the Prime Minister's statements and found them wanting. At the same time, with the world having come so close to nuclear catastrophe, those who opposed nuclear arms were more determined than ever to keep them out of Canada. Indeed, the catalytic effect of the crisis brought the nuclear issue to a head and Diefenbaker's administration to an end. Some three months later, the government collapsed.⁷⁵

The Cuba confrontation was harrowing for everyone, but beneath the veneer of "playing it cool" the crisis may well have been even more frightening to the Canadian political leadership than it was to the American. Canadian fears intensified because Canadians found themselves at the brink without consent and because after the proclamation of the alert, they found themselves helpless to influence the course of events in which they were nonetheless inextricably involved. On the last evening of the crisis, Saturday, October 27, External Affairs Minister Green drove up to the Gatineau hills near Ottawa with his wife. In the middle of the night he was awakened by the explosion of a faulty electrical transformer. "I thought that was it," he later reflected. "I thought it was a bomb."⁷⁶

⁷⁵See Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, "Did He Fall or Was He Pushed? The Kennedy Administration and Collapse of the Diefenbaker Government," *International History Review* (in press).

⁷⁶Green interview, July 9, 1974. The minister told the same story with slightly different wording on the television series "The Tenth Decade," Nov. 24, 1971 (transcript provided by the CBC). Three months after the crisis, Green also told the House of Commons that "on Saturday night after the Cuban crisis arose I believed, and I have no doubt many other people did, that before morning, Ottawa might be demolished. . . ." *Debates* (Jan. 24, 1963), 3068.

Politics and the Park: San Francisco's Fight for Hetch Hetchy, 1908–1913

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TWO DEEP, GRANITE-CLIFFED, flat-bottomed valleys, their walls festooned with some of the world's most spectacular waterfalls, dominate Yosemite National Park. One of these valleys, Yosemite Valley, is a great tourist attraction; the other, Hetch Hetchy Valley, is a municipal reservoir for the city of San Francisco. Both valleys thus serve the public in different ways, and in that contrast lies the central theme of an important debate over the original proposal to dam Hetch Hetchy which concerned some Americans between 1909 and 1913. For a small but vociferous group led by the great naturalist, John Muir, and some of his friends, the dam proposal was a horror. Muir thundered: "Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man. . . ."¹ But others saw the matter in a different light. California Democratic leader James D. Phelan, for example, insisted that the Hetch Hetchy project was absolutely essential to save the city from "monopoly and microb[e]s."²

¹John Muir, *Let Everyone Help to Save the Famous Hetch Hetchy Valley and Stop the Commercial Destruction Which Threatens Our National Parks* (San Francisco, 1909).

²James D. Phelan to J. P. Tumulty, Dec. 26, 1913, James D. Phelan Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.