

Canada, it is difficult to see how an enemy surface vessel could get into the Gulf, or if it did, get out again, especially now that aircraft play so large a part in observation and attack. Submarines are a different story: both straits have ample water to allow submarines proceeding through submerged. The Straits of Bell Isle, with modern means of detection, could be made very dangerous to them, but no doubt they could still pass and re-pass Cabot Strait, but certainly not without considerable risk. If the island by some unlucky chance were to fall into hostile hands, it would be another story: shipping within the Gulf would be in constant peril. Everything considered, Newfoundland may be held to be a very effective stopper in the Canadian bottle, or in the picturesque language of Mr. Churchill, "an orange in the mouth of a sucking pig".

Strategically our possession of Labrador is also very important. Apart altogether from the airport at Goose, seaplanes may very well be secreted in the deep fiords of Labrador and by building up caches of gasoline between Quebec and Ontario, and using the innumerable lakes of that part of the world, they could work across to within easy bombing distances of the main centres of the continent, strike sudden blows and be off again. Anyone who knows that country will grasp at once the difficulties involved in stalking a raider to his lair. If he had numerous caches of gasoline on various lakes, he could keep playing hide and seek indefinitely.... The coast of Labrador, the natural base from which bush-raiding would be conducted, is definitely of great strategic importance.

The great airport at Gander has changed the strategic picture of Newfoundland for it is so large and has such an enormous capacity in plane traffic that it becomes like a great fortress or battleship. It would be fatal to allow an enemy to damage it or capture it, hence the defences by which it is surrounded make the island still more like a fortress — a fortress from which the garrison can sally out at will and over oceanic distances. From Newfoundland, modern bombing planes can reach the British Isles to the east and Martinique, Puerto Rico and New Orleans to the south, Kansas City and Regina to the west.... If the Newfoundland airports were in hostile hands, many important centres might thus expect to be bombed.

The vital position of Newfoundland in the approaches to North America thus clearly comes out. It covers the whole of the eastern seaboard at least as far down as New York. If it were in the hands of an unfriendly power, all exits from the Gulf of St. Lawrence would be closed and every Atlantic coast port down as far as Boston would be subject to attack from the air. Even if the power which had seized it did not have complete command of the sea, it could slip out surface raiders as the Germans did in the last war....

The constant element in all strategic studies is geography in its aspects of distance, topography, means of communication and climate. The varying element is national policy. Before specific strategic plans can be worked out, the policy of the state must be decided upon. If the state wishes to survive, the constant elements impose upon its policy a certain quality of predestination....

Let us look at what the attitudes of the chief powers interested must necessarily therefore be towards Newfoundland. The countries considered are Great Britain, the United States and Canada in the order named. The direct interest of Great Britain in Newfoundland is small. There is the historic connection, composed of sentiment, allegiance and finance, but for Great Britain Newfoundland is necessarily a minor matter, one of the infinite embarrassing problems of empire, no more. The day has long gone by when British policy towards North America had any element of the dynamic about it — that day passed with the annexation of Canada in 1763 — and today North America represents for England not a sphere of interest but a supply base. Providing the supplies keep coming, the internal matters of the continent are a matter of indifference to Great Britain. Her anxiety about supplies would lead her to try to see that there are good bases from which they may be despatched, but efforts of this sort take the form of advice and request, not of direct action. In World War I, Great Britain was still acting indirectly in British North America and there was much British naval activity in the Atlantic ports, especially St. John's and Halifax. In the last war Canada replaced Great Britain, except in the matter of convoying ships.

For the United States, on the other hand, Newfoundland is vital. The United States could not possibly tolerate a hostile power in Newfoundland. American naval thinking since