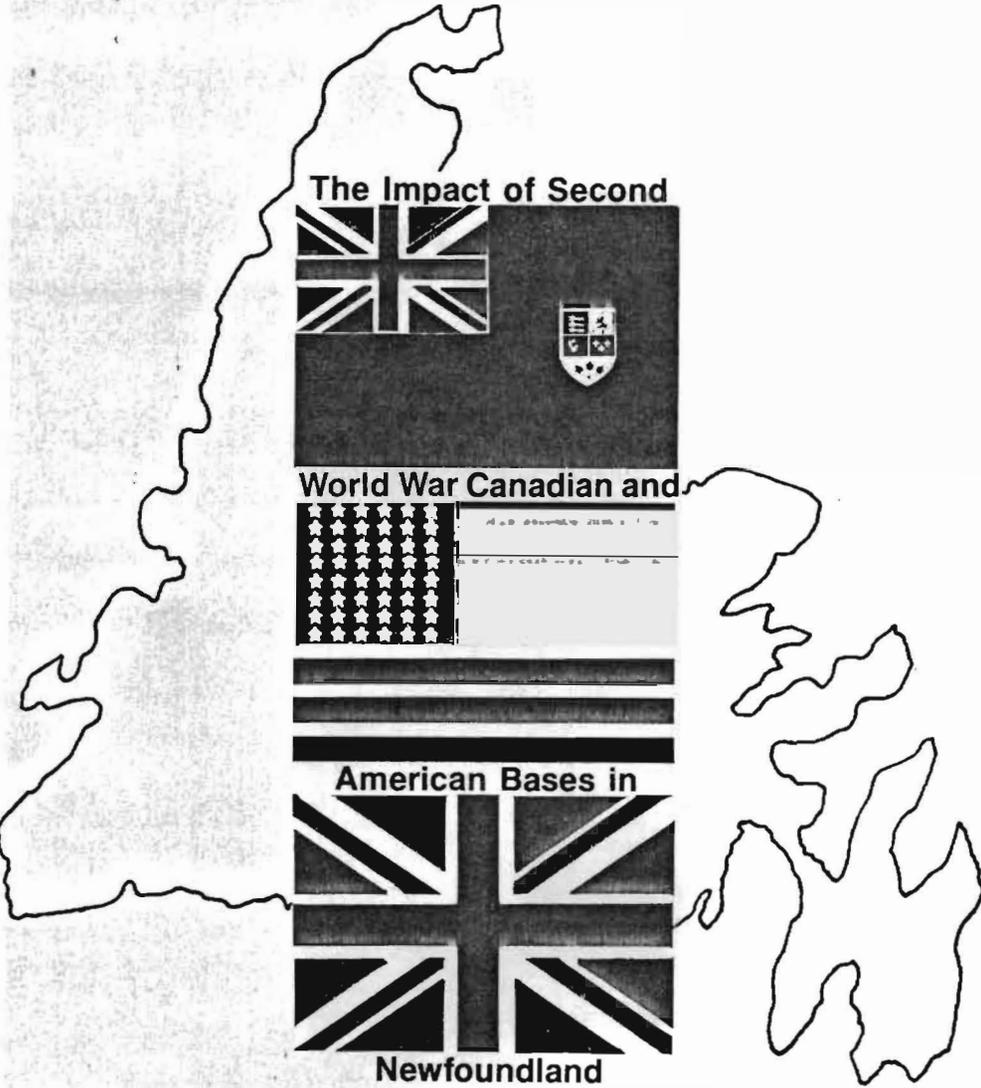




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Peace of the Continent



Malcolm MacLeod

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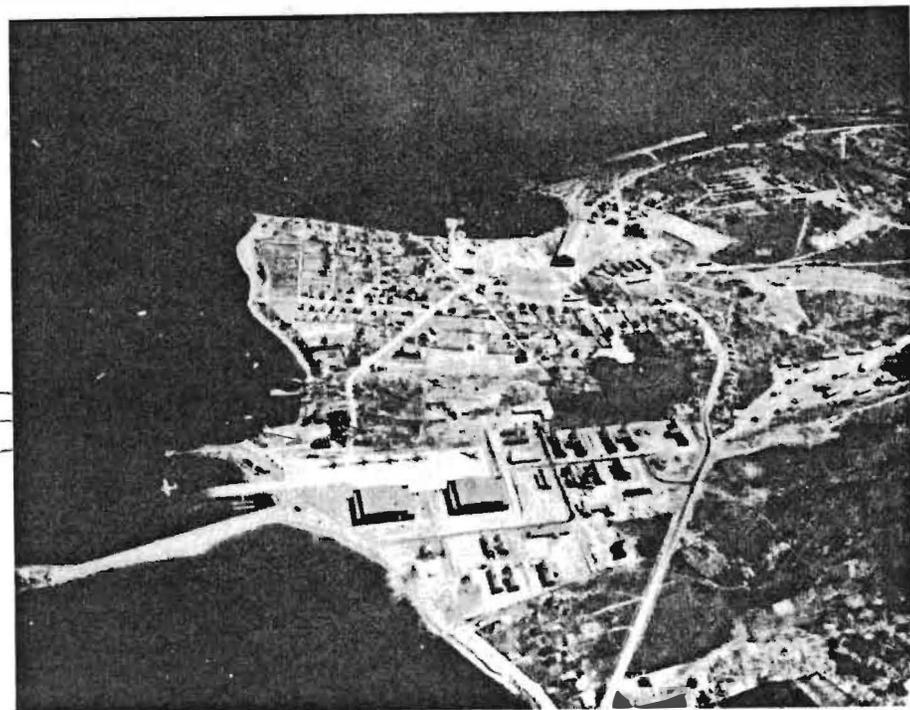
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FRIENDLY FORCES

Very quickly after sirens screamed in Europe, Canada moved to embrace the offshore island within its scheme for home defence. In September-October 1939 the RCAF began scouting over Newfoundland waters and was given control of the fledgling sea plane base at Botwood,¹ while an RCMP anti-sabotage expert arrived to inspect security arrangements at Bell Island, vital to Cape Breton's production of "More than 1/3 of the steel required for munitions in Canada . . ."² When France fell the following June, Canadian troops took up guarding Gander, Bell Island and St. John's. A series of Canada-Newfoundland defence conferences produced a comprehensive agreement by April 1941.³ Canada was made responsible for the colony's defence, took command of Newfoundland's militia,⁴ and was to develop seven military bases under a variety of lease and ownership arrangements.⁵ The Royal Canadian Navy would operate a base for convoy escorts in St. John's harbour, and a ship repair facility at nearby Bay Bulls. The RCAF would conduct operations from the Newfoundland Airport at Gander, and from Botwood and Gleneagles (on Gander Lake), and would develop new air facilities in Labrador (Goose Bay) and on the outskirts of St. John's. Infantry and artillery units were to be stationed at all these places, for the country's general protection and to shield Canadian naval and air installations. Large scale Canadian construction in Newfoundland began in October 1940.⁶ Canadian forces in Newfoundland built up to a strength of about 16,000 during the 1943-45 period. In 1943 there were 5700 army personnel on the island plus 1300 in Labrador;⁷ a naval shore establishment that reached 3600, plus 4000 on the ships;⁸ and an RCAF contingent of perhaps 2000. By war's end army strength had declined by about 2000, and the RCN had increased by the same number.⁹

The dispatch of American forces to Newfoundland began later than the Canadian build up, progressed faster, and

Botwood POP. estimated 1500-2000 1939
Shipping port For Newsprint & Copper Ore
Fishing was Never a big industry here.



General view of Botwood defence installations. In foreground one can see the seaplane base. July, 1943. (photo courtesy P.A.C.)

Flying boat Docks

Terminal Facilities Taken over by RCAF.

The size of Botwood, ^{1940's} is captured in this photo

Location of the Trans Atlantic INN
Mrs. Cobb: Proprietor³