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## Treason at Quebec: British Espionage in Canada during the Winter of 1759

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# TREASON AT QUEBEC:

## BRITISH ESPIONAGE IN CANADA DURING THE WINTER OF 1759-1760

**D. Peter MacLeod**

In the spring of 1760, the British garrison at Quebec, commanded by James Murray,<sup>1</sup> found itself the target of a French army intent upon the recapture of the colonial capital. Led by the exceptionally able Francois de Levis,<sup>2</sup> the French hoped to surprise Murray's outnumbered and isolated army,<sup>3</sup> but even as the French embarked at Montreal on 20 May, Murray was writing that he had "received certain intelligence" of French preparations and taken appropriate precautions.<sup>4</sup> Much of this foreknowledge came from British spies working behind the French lines. Although prior to September 1759 the British had not possessed a single operative in Canada, Quebec, now in British hands, became the base for a modest espionage organization which proved capable of scattering informants throughout the towns and countryside of New France and recruiting at least one agent in the confidence of the very highest officials of the colonial administration.

The British strategists who planned the attack upon Quebec in 1759 had given little consideration to gathering information regarding the deployment of French forces. No attempt was made to recruit spies who might report upon conditions in Canada. When Major-General James Wolfe and Admiral Sir Charles Saunders ascended the St. Lawrence, their best intelligence came from the reports of British officers who had been taken prisoner in the interior and later exchanged, and the fifteen-year-old *History and General Description of New France* by Pierre Charlevoix.<sup>5</sup>

This indifference to espionage was typical of the British in North America during the Seven Years' War. There were no formal intelligence organizations attached to their armies in North America, and each general was responsible for directing the gathering of intelligence.<sup>6</sup> Information was acquired through the reports of Amerindians, scouts, prisoners, and deserters, together with captured documents.<sup>7</sup> Reports from Amerindians, who were able to move freely between French and British North America, even in time of war, were of particular importance and frequently provided reliable intelligence.<sup>8</sup> Yet the British, who generally enjoyed numerical superiority, based their planning upon their own capabilities and objectives, rather than those of the French.<sup>9</sup>

This was not, however, the case in Quebec in the winter of 1759-1760. The capture of Quebec in 1759 had converted that town from a French colonial capital to an isolated British enclave deep in the heart of New France, and left Canada itself divided into French and British zones. The French retreat from Quebec halted at the mouth of the Jacques Cartier River. Fort Jacques Cartier, erected on the western bank, and screened by advanced posts at Pointe aux Trembles and Saint Augustin, became the French headquarters for operations on the new Anglo-French frontier during the winter of 1759-1760. From the Jacques Cartier River eastward, the St. Lawrence valley was within the reach of the British garrison of Quebec. A series of expeditions in the fall of

1759 reduced the parishes in the vicinity of Quebec to nominal submission, producing a British zone guarded by outposts at Ancienne Lorette<sup>10</sup> and Sainte-Foy, which blocked the roads leading to Quebec. Nonetheless, the British had firm control only over the town of Quebec, and even within the walls remained on their guard against a generally hostile, if submissive, population.<sup>11</sup> Outside Quebec, they travelled safely only in armed parties among a population that remained generally loyal to France.<sup>12</sup>

*James Murray*

(Artist unknown, NAC C2834)



Cut off from assistance from Britain or British North America until the spring, the British garrison could not afford to wait passively within Quebec and ignore French movements and intentions. If they were to survive the winter, the British needed supplies of fresh provisions and firewood, commodities that could be obtained only from the countryside. Moreover, the French forces were under the command of the capable and aggressive Levis, who could be expected to attempt to recover Quebec. To procure supplies,

outposts had to be established and patrols sent out into the parishes of the government of Quebec.<sup>13</sup> Resisting a major attack demanded the concentration of Murray's force. Both to maintain access to local resources and to resist a major expedition, intelligence of French movements and intentions was necessary. Should the British fail to obtain this information, the French would be able to strike with impunity, decimate British outposts, prevent the British from securing provisions and firewood, and finally assemble an army that could attack Quebec without warning.

Some information regarding French capabilities and intentions was acquired from French deserters and prisoners. But Murray considered these sources of intelligence to be inadequate, and sought a means of "opening and keeping up an intercourse with their [French] head quarters."<sup>14</sup> This could only be accomplished through espionage.

In spite of Murray's understandable desire for highly-placed sources, much of the information that he needed was not closely guarded. The habitants of the parishes of Quebec were aware of, and cooperated with, the movements of French detachments. Within the French zone, where troops were billeted among the habitants and military movements and preparations took place under the eyes of the population, even secret military dispatches quickly became common knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Thus both within the occupied parishes of the Quebec area and west of the Jacques Cartier River, valuable military intelligence could be secured by simply listening to local gossip.

To secure this information, Murray needed individuals possessed of legitimate reasons for travelling, and thus able to move freely and inconspicuously in the occupied parishes of the government of Quebec and the French zone. Elsewhere in North America, this would have been very difficult. The frontier between the French at Jacques Cartier and the

British at Quebec, however, was more permeable than the wilderness separating New France and New England. Here, war was conducted in a settled agricultural region where a semblance of normal life continued under British military occupation. Indeed, following the capitulation of Quebec, a flourishing commerce had developed between the French and British zones. By 25 November, Murray was angrily aware "that the [British] merchants, ever greedy of gain, to purchase furs had transmitted a good deal of cash to Montreal."<sup>16</sup>



*François de Lévis*  
(painting by J. Parreau, NAC C34215)

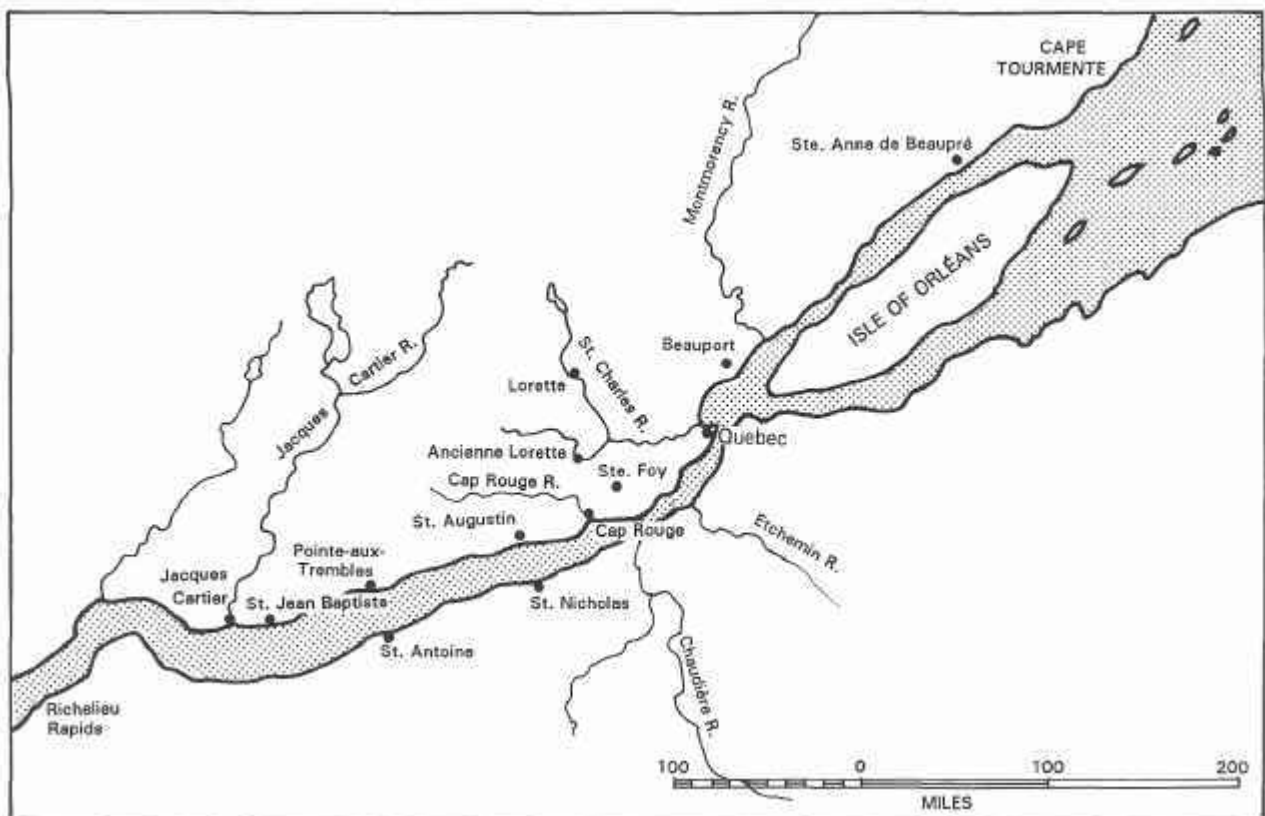
In January 1760, a French officer noted that "We hear from [Fort] Jacques Cartier that a means has been found to obtain many things from Quebec."<sup>17</sup> As a result of this trade, according to one of Lévis' *aides de camp*, during the winter of 1759-1760 "there was established an intercourse between the English at Quebec and the French at James [Jacques] Cartier, as if it had been in time of peace."<sup>18</sup> Some of these travellers were undoubtedly legitimate merchants, quietly going about their business. But the ease with which merchants could

travel across the Anglo-French frontier and within the British zone made them the potential spies that Murray required.

In the last weeks of September 1759, the British, obliged to purchase locally to supplement their own resources, had quickly established contact with the local merchant community. Within a week of the capitulation of Quebec, Canadians, who found British hard currency more attractive than discounted French bills of exchange, were supplying the British with fresh vegetables.<sup>19</sup> "Everyone in Quebec," wrote Francois Bigot,<sup>20</sup> the Intendant of New France, "thinks of restoring his fortunes and little of the interests of the king and the colony."<sup>21</sup>

Some of these merchants were drawn by the British into espionage and treason. They were recruited by two captains of the 15th (Amherst's) Regiment, James Barbutt and Hector Theophilus Cramahe, to whom Murray had entrusted the responsibility for "the management of the spies."<sup>22</sup> The details of these recruitments were not recorded, but Thomas Pichon, who became a British spy as early as 1754, later recalled that:

... [Captain George] Scott, whom I had met at Louisbourg, and who was in command at Fort Lawrence, close to the French fort [Beausejour] asked me to go to see him. In the course of our conversations about the respective interests of the two Crowns in North America, he gave me to understand that he could make my fortune, that he knew of means which were very safe, and that I should have no cause for regret if I accepted his proposal.<sup>23</sup>



Quebec, 1759-1760



*Francois Bigot*  
(Artist unknown, NAC C3715)

Rather than straightforward financial inducements, Barbutt and Cramahe offered potential spies and couriers the means to continue their business. In a colony where goods of all kinds were in short supply, merchants who agreed to work for the British gained access to large quantities of materiel seized from French government stores.<sup>24</sup> To dispose of their merchandise outside the walls of Quebec, merchants needed permission from the military authorities to leave the town. Those who cooperated with Murray's

spymasters could expect to receive passports allowing them to travel freely. In return, it was expected that in the course of disposing of their merchandise in the parishes of the government of Quebec or in the French zone, these merchants would gather information of use to the British.

The possession of articles that could be obtained only from British sources was plausibly explained, and treasonous dealings with the British government partly concealed, by the presence of a large group of British merchants in the colony.<sup>25</sup> Contacts with British military authorities could be camouflaged by regulations that obliged travellers to obtain permission to enter or leave Quebec and to travel in the neighbouring parishes of the French zone.<sup>26</sup>

Once recruited, some of these spies remained behind British lines and roamed throughout the occupied zone, buying and selling various commodities, and all the while collecting information which would never have been given to a British patrol, then returning to Quebec to report their findings.<sup>27</sup> More ambitious operations involved outfitting merchants with goods that were in demand in the French-held governments of Trois Rivières and Montreal—which included brandy, wine, salt and other provisions and dry goods—and issuing passports allowing them to pass the British outposts.<sup>28</sup> Once beyond the Jacques Cartier River, these spies continued into French territory to dispose of their wares and gather intelligence.

The French were aware of the danger posed by collaborators acting as British spies, and attempted to neutralize potential traitors by sealing off the British zone and allowing only authorized persons to cross the frontier. In mid-October of 1759, French officials had decided that it was "essential to establish control over the movements of the merchants,"<sup>29</sup> and those spies who first attempted to penetrate the French zone were turned back at French outposts. But at some point the British operatives were permitted to cross the French outpost line and continue westward into French-held territory. Murray believed that they were "allowed to pass. . . from a

persuasion, that the merchants and carriers being French would not betray their country."<sup>30</sup>

Within French-controlled territory, a careful watch was maintained for "suspicious persons" believed to be travelling "to obtain knowledge of our movements."<sup>31</sup> These individuals were liable to be "arrested as spies."<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately,



*Thomas Pichon*  
(painting by Henri Beau, NAC CI 0608)

for the French, their precautions were prudent but misdirected. French authorities harassed strangers who could not account for their movements, but genuine British spies appeared to be going about their legitimate business, and were left in peace.

In contemporary documents, French military and civil officers never voiced suspicions that their counter-intelligence was anything but effective. Not until five years after these events did a single allusion to the possibility that Canadians had been acting as

British spies appear in writing. Then, Marie-Joseph Legardeur de Repentigny, a nun of the General Hospital of Quebec, suggested that French partisan operations during the winter of 1759-1760 had been compromised by collaborators.<sup>33</sup>

The work of British spies in Canada was by nature confidential, and generated little documentation. Only two of these spies can be identified by name.<sup>34</sup> One of Murray's less reliable sources of information was Eli Laparre, a Quebec surgeon and generally unsuccessful entrepreneur.<sup>35</sup> At some point following the capitulation of Quebec, the surgeon-merchant became involved in a new venture. "In the winter of 1759," wrote Murray, Laparre "was employed by me as a spy."<sup>36</sup>

Recruited by Barbutt and Cramahe, Laparre was given a passport to carry "some trifling merchandize to Montreal."<sup>37</sup> He returned, very probably on the evening of 6 February 1760, and reported that the French planned to send a large detachment to the parishes below Quebec to secure flour and cattle.<sup>38</sup> Murray, however, did not entirely trust Laparre or his information, and was uncertain regarding the numbers and intentions of the French. Rather than acting immediately, he "determined to wait till this was clear'd up."<sup>39</sup> Not until six days later, when Laparre's "intelligence [was]... confirmed by spies I had more dependence upon," did Murray dispatch a detachment of light infantry which drove off the French force. At the same time, he gave several of his informers passports which allowed them to trade with the habitants for furs and other goods, and "desired La Parre and others to go to the lower parishes and give me information of the enemy's motions."<sup>40</sup>

Laparre, however, promptly disappeared, and employed the freedom of movement conferred by his passport to travel to Tadoussac to recover debts by seizing property in the King's Posts.<sup>41</sup> He managed to make a satisfactory explanation for his conduct to the British authorities in September of 1760, but was later reported to be outfitting privateers in Saint Paul's Bay and arrested. Following the cession of Canada, Laparre continued his medical practice and commercial activities,

but enjoyed no better fortune as an entrepreneur under the British than the French.<sup>42</sup>

Other spies proved more reliable and generated a steady flow of intelligence regarding French movements. When the Captains of Militia of the southern parishes attempted to mislead Murray regarding the French, the British general was undeceived, as he had "rec'd information that most of the Captains [had] made false reports."<sup>43</sup>

However important the tactical intelligence secured by Laparre and his anonymous fellows might be, Murray was most in need of information regarding the apprehended siege of Quebec by the French. Even as inconspicuous informers controlled by Barbutt and Cramahe scurried about the countryside, the planning of a spring offensive against Murray's isolated garrison was underway at the French headquarters in Montreal. Those involved included the most senior officers of the French armed forces and colonial administration, together with a number of private individuals. Among the latter was a leading Quebec merchant, Barthelemy Martin. Born in Marseilles, Martin emigrated to Canada prior to 1749, and quickly established "one of the most important trading companies in Quebec towards the end of the French regime."<sup>44</sup> When he married, the marriage contract was witnessed by the Governor-General, Intendant, and Bishop.<sup>45</sup>

Martin left Quebec towards the end of December 1759. When he arrived in Montreal, the Quebec merchant, long accustomed to dealing with the highest levels of the colonial government, contacted Francois Bigot, and informed him that he had access to stocks of goods in Quebec.<sup>46</sup> Later that winter, when the French found themselves in need of "certain indispensable articles which could not be found within the [French-held area] of the colony," and sought to obtain them covertly from the British zone,<sup>47</sup> Martin became involved in logistical preparations for the most important military operation of the French regime—the attempt to save the colony by recapturing Quebec.

One commodity was of particular concern to Levis, who had been designated commander of the siege force. He informed the Governor-General of New France, Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil,<sup>48</sup> who was also the commander-in-chief of the French armed forces in North America, that "it is indispensable to include a *mis erabfe*<sup>49</sup> of brandy in the ration of the soldiers and militiamen destined to take part in the siege of Quebec."<sup>50</sup> Vaudreuil passed on this request to Bigot, who reported that of the three hundred *quarts*<sup>51</sup> of brandy that would be required, only fifty could be purchased in the Montreal area. However, the Intendant added that Barthelemy Martin was in a position to procure brandy from Quebec.<sup>52</sup> Vaudreuil agreed to authorize the necessary expenditure, and Martin was consequently asked to "obtain from Quebec about 250 *quarts* of brandy which will be delivered to the magazines of the King at [Fort] Jacques Cartier."<sup>53</sup>

Martin then presented a memoir to Bigot, in which he formally stated that he had left about two hundred *quarts* of brandy behind in Quebec with his associate, Tropez Martin, and could secure further supplies from British merchants. He agreed to arrange for the purchase of this brandy, and to "make other payments. . . in order to have the liberty to remove the brandy from Quebec."<sup>54</sup> The helpful entrepreneur could have added that both his brandy and his ability to export commodities from the British zone had been acquired through the good offices of Barbutt and Cramahe, in exchange for Martin's agreement to become a spy.<sup>55</sup>

With a contract in hand, Martin met with the Governor-General to discuss the enterprise. Vaudreuil, who considered the procurement of a supply of brandy for the army to be of great importance to the colony, "on account of the rigour of the season and because the army will be deprived of all comforts,"<sup>56</sup> instructed Martin "to make haste and spare nothing for this operation." He granted the merchant "complete liberty to go to Pointe aux Trembles, to St. Augustin, and even to Quebec, if he judged it expedient," and ordered the commandant at Fort Jacques Cartier to provide whatever horses and vehicles might be needed to transport Martin's wares from Quebec.<sup>57</sup>



Soon after 7 March, Martin left Montreal. Two days later, the British spy was on the frontier and preparing to open communications with Quebec.<sup>58</sup> Martin's actual movements during this period are uncertain, but the use of one Tache, who had already managed to ship "some beverages" from Quebec, as a messenger or intermediary was recorded.<sup>59</sup> In the last week of March, Martin secured the services of Tache, who returned to Quebec "to fulfil the object of his [Martin's] mission."<sup>60</sup> By 1 April, working through Tache, Martin successfully delivered fifty *minots*<sup>61</sup> of salt, and sent Tache back to acquire more merchandise.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, Martin made contact with the British authorities and began to supply intelligence regarding French preparations for the siege of Quebec.

As he embarked upon the campaign, Levis considered it "essential to arrive in front of Quebec before the enemy learned of our march."<sup>63</sup> He believed that the secret of the French advance had been kept from 20 April when his army left Montreal until it reached a point about twenty kilometres south-west of Quebec on 27 April. It was only there, to his knowledge, that the British were "then informed of our march," when the sole survivor of a wrecked *bateaux* drifted downriver and was rescued at Quebec.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, even as the French army departed from Montreal, Murray was warning his officers that an attack could be expected shortly. As early as 28 March the British general had been informed that the French were preparing their vessels at Sorel for "an early expedition in the spring."<sup>65</sup> Four days later, he received "fresh intelligence. . . of the designs of the French."<sup>66</sup> Finally, on 17 April, "the best intelligence was now procur'd," regarding Levis' intentions.<sup>67</sup> According to this information, the French planned to open their campaign by "making themselves masters of the embouchure of the River Caprouge, the most convenient place for disembarking their artillery & stores, and for securing their retreat," then marching on Quebec.<sup>68</sup> The source of this intelligence is not specifically mentioned in Murray's contemporary letters or diary, but Martin's arrival on the frontier coincided with the beginning of a series of reports concerning

French activities, and Murray later credited Martin with betraying the details of French plans for a spring offensive.<sup>69</sup>

Murray based his plans for the initial stages of the defence of Quebec upon this information. He decided to forestall the French by establishing a redoubt on the high ground overlooking the mouth of the Cap Rouge River:

... in order to hinder the enemy from landing their cannon in the river, and to oblige them to bring it round by land [by way of Lorette], which, considering the badness of the road, would in that case delay their operations a considerable time.<sup>70</sup>

Construction of the redoubt began on 17 April. Eight days later, the exposed garrison of Ancienne Lorette was withdrawn to Sainte-Foy.<sup>71</sup> On 24 April, a highland officer noted that "the General seems certain that the French are preparing to come and attack the place, and will, he says, be here in a very few days."<sup>72</sup>

This prediction, and the intelligence it was based upon, proved correct. On 26 April, the French army disembarked at St. Augustin, about seven kilometres west of the Cap Rouge River. As Murray had hoped, Levis elected to march inland from there to Ancienne Lorette, then follow a road leading from Ancienne Lorette to Sainte-Foy.<sup>73</sup>

This delay cost the French the advantage of tactical surprise. During the night of 26-27 April, the British were informed by the rescued Frenchman of the French landing and march on Ancienne Lorette. On 27 April, Murray marched with part of his garrison to Sainte-Foy, where he encountered the French force marching southward from Ancienne Lorette. Finding himself outnumbered, and about to be outflanked, Murray withdrew the garrisons at Cap Rouge and Sainte-Foy, then retreated safely to Quebec.<sup>74</sup>

Murray's outpost at Cap Rouge had, as he had hoped, "obliged them [the French] to land their army twenty miles higher up, and to risque a battle without artillery after a march of thirty miles."<sup>75</sup> But whatever advantages this may have gained for Murray, on the next morning he followed Montcalm's example by abandoning a strong position on the Buttes a

Neveu, and charged downhill to defeat in the Battle of Sainte-Foy.<sup>76</sup>

Although he lost the battle, Murray won the campaign by withdrawing to Quebec and enduring a siege that lasted from 29 April to 17 May 1760.<sup>77</sup> French operations during this siege were crippled by the lack of an artillery train that would have enabled them to batter down the walls of Quebec. In its absence, Levis pinned his hopes for success upon the arrival of assistance from France. When a British squadron appeared on the river below Quebec, Levis lifted the siege and withdrew with his army towards Montreal. There are no references to British intelligence operations during the siege, but immediately after the French departed, Barbutt and Cramahe reestablished contact with their spies. By 25 May, these agents, together with prisoners and deserters, had provided sufficient information regarding shortages of provisions and munitions among the French to convince Murray that Levis was no longer in a position to threaten the British in Quebec.<sup>78</sup>

The financial details of Martin's transactions are somewhat obscure. He appears to have given to the British eight thousand *livres* in bills of exchange drawn on his Parisian banker for the brandy, which he subsequently sold to the French for 554,677 *livres* 10 *sols*.<sup>79</sup> In the event, as of 1765 he had neither paid the British, nor been paid by the French.<sup>80</sup> After the surrender of Montreal, Martin returned to France to attempt to collect the money owed to him by the French crown. There, he became involved in the investigation of *Vaffaire du Canada*, but as a witness, rather than a defendant.<sup>81</sup> Martin may never have collected his money, but he emerged from the financial scandals surrounding the fall of New France with his reputation intact, and remained known to all but a few British officers as a loyal French subject who had done his best to contribute to the defence of Canada under the most difficult conditions.

In September of 1759, the residents of the government of Quebec found themselves under the rule of an occupying army. Out of a range of possible responses, from violent



*Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil*  
(Artist unknown, NAC CI 1243)

resistance to wholehearted collaboration, tens of thousands of these Canadians elected to cooperate with the British to a limited extent, by surrendering their arms, taking a nominal oath of allegiance, and obeying British ordinances, while reserving their ultimate allegiance to France and assisting the French armed forces whenever possible.

Loyalty, however, can be an extremely fragile commodity. Every society contains within it individuals who will betray their loyalty to crown, state or collectivity for personal advantage. Canadians in 1759 and 1760 proved themselves to be no better and no worse than any other people.

In Murray's opinion, no Canadian supported the British on account of any sense of discontent with the French or appreciation of their new rulers. Those who collaborated did so in return for material incentives, "as no

other consideration could engage them to act for us."<sup>82</sup> These considerations included cash payments, military rations and access to scarce commodities that could be resold at a considerable profit.

An unknown number of Canadians became purveyors of provisions to the British garrison. Others were employed "for the purposes of carting and bringing in fuel for the garrison" and as "spies, pilots, artificers, [or] clerks."<sup>83</sup> The best known of these collaborators were the pilots who guided British fleets up the St. Lawrence in 1759 and 1760, thereby earning themselves a small but prominent place in Canadian demonology.<sup>84</sup> The role of Canadians who provided the British with military intelligence, on the other hand, has been all but ignored.

The British hold on Quebec during the winter of 1759-1760 was precarious, and Murray depended upon intelligence to anticipate French actions to a greater degree than other British generals in North America during the Seven Years' War. In the months following the capitulation of Quebec, James Barbutt and Hector Cramahe succeeded in building an effective intelligence network. This would not have been possible without the active cooperation of French merchants who collected and delivered this information.

These merchants may have betrayed the French and collaborated with the British, but their highest loyalty was to themselves. Just as the British used them to gather intelligence, they used the British to acquire resources that they needed to further their private interests. Laparre employed his British passport to obtain the freedom of movement that he needed to collect money owed to him by travelling to the King's Posts and seizing merchandise. Martin used the British as a source of commodities which he hoped to sell for a considerable profit. When their connections with the British ceased to be of use to them, these spies, at least in the case of Laparre, forsook the British as readily as they had the French. But whatever their ultimate loyalties, they provided the British with a steady flow of information.

This intelligence was of considerable value to Murray. His outnumbered and isolated garrison was confronted by an enemy whose skill in partisan warfare had been demonstrated many times in the course of the war, fighting on intimately familiar territory in defence of their homes. Yet throughout the winter of 1759-1760 it was the French rather than the British who were consistently outmaneuvered. Intelligence supplied by Laparre, and others like him, enabled Murray to anticipate the actions of the French, and take appropriate countermeasures. He withdrew exposed patrols, reinforced threatened outposts, drove off French detachments and struck at the French advanced positions before they could threaten the British.<sup>85</sup> In the course of that winter, said Murray, "The enemy made several attempts upon me which were entirely baffled by the timely notice I had of their enterprizes."<sup>86</sup>

Throughout the winter, Murray had received word of plans for campaigns against Quebec that never materialized.<sup>87</sup> When the French finally began preparations in earnest, it was Martin's reports that revealed to Murray that these activities were actually underway and the approximate date of the French attack.<sup>88</sup> Thanks to this spy, said Murray, "When their army assembled in the spring I had early notice."<sup>89</sup> Martin's warning thwarted Levis' attempts to surprise the British, but did not enable Murray to win a victory at the Battle of Sainte-Foy. This defeat, however, was the product of mistakes in the field, not faulty intelligence.

In the winter of 1759-1760, Barbutt and Cramahe fulfilled Murray's goal of establishing a line of communication between French headquarters at Montreal and the British outpost at Quebec. During that time, Murray was provided with clear and accurate estimates of French capabilities and intentions. This intelligence helped the beleaguered British garrison to exploit the resources of the parishes surrounding Quebec, neutralize French attempts to do the same and prepare for the French attack upon Quebec. Seven years after the campaign, Murray himself paid tribute both to the efficacy and the economy of his espionage network:

Every Body will allow I had good Intelligence,. . . no man had better. I am sure no army ever wanted it more, and that no nation ever paid less for it.<sup>90</sup>

The search for an explanation for the fall of New France has long fascinated historians, who continue to weigh the relative significance of, among other things, British military and naval preponderance, French imperial policy and French tactical errors in decisive battles.<sup>91</sup> Subsidiary to these factors, but nonetheless important, was the presence of traitors among the Canadians, who became British spies. The information that they provided to James Murray during the winter of 1759-1760 cannot be overlooked in any assessment of the conditions that facilitated the successful consolidation of the lodgement established by the siege of Quebec in 1759, and thus contributed to the British conquest of New France.

I would like to thank S. Barry Cottam and Professor Cornelius J. Jaenen, of the Department of History, University of Ottawa, who were kind enough to read and comment upon earlier versions of this paper.

## NOTES

1. G.P. Browne, "James Murray," Frances G. Halpenny, ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB)*, volume IV, 1771-1800. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979, pp. 569-578; Albert Anthony Wetherell, "General James Murray and British Canada: The Transition from French to British Rule, 1759-1766," Ph.D. dissertation, St. John's University, 1979.
2. W.J. Eccles, "Francois de Levis," *DCB*, vol. IV, pp. 477-482.
3. At the Battle of Sainte-Foy on 28 April, 3,647 British troops opposed a French force of 7,260. See H.R. Casgrain, ed., *Journal des campagnes du chevalier de Levis en Canada de 1756 - 1760*. Montreal: CO. Beauchemin & fils, 1889, p. 257.
4. Murray to Colvill, 20 May 1760, National Archives of Canada (NAC), James Murray Papers, MG 23, G II 1, series 1, vol. 1, fl. 37, microfilm, reel C-2225.
5. C.P. Stacey, *Quebec, 1759: The Siege and the Battle*. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1959, pp. 45-48.
6. This task was usually delegated to a secretary or aide. See Roger Kaplan, "The Hidden War: British Intelligence Operations during the American Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, vol. XLVII, no. 1 (January 1990), pp. 116-177.
7. Only a single British spy, Thomas Pichon, a clerk at Fort Beausejour, is known to have been active within French territory prior to 1759. See T.A. Crowley, "Thomas Pichon," *DCB*, vol. IV, pp. 630-632.
8. See, for example, Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry & the "Massacre"*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 78.
9. Kaplan, "The Hidden War," p. 117.
10. This parish should not be confused with the Huron village of Jeune Lorette.
11. "From our first entrance in the Town of Quebec, our orders were every night repeated, to lye on our arms: No officer, or soldier, unless he was sick, was allowed to undress, or go to bed; nor were we on any pretence, allowed to put off our accoutrements during the night." [John Johnson, "Memoirs of the Siege of Quebec and Total Reduction of Canada in 1759 and 1760, by John Johnson, Clerk and Quarter Master Sergeant to the 58th Reg't," in A.G. Doughty, G.W. Parmelee, *The Siege of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham*, vol. V. Quebec: Dussault & Proulx, 1901, p. 117.]
12. Soldiers carrying messages between Quebec and British outposts disguised themselves as Canadians. See Murray to Hussey, 20 November, 1759, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol. 1, f. 11.
13. Under the French regime, Canada was divided into three administrative districts, known as *gouvernements*, centered on the towns of Quebec, Trois Rivières and Montreal.
14. "Murray's Answers, *seriatim* and *in extenso*, to the various Articles of Complaint laid against him," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol. 3, f. 229. Murray, who became Governor of Canada following the cession of the colony in 1763, produced this document in response to accusations of malfeasance and improprieties laid against him by elements of the British mercantile community in Canada. These charges led to his recall in 1766, but in April of 1767 Murray was fully exonerated following an inquiry by the Lords of Committee of Council. For details of these events, see Browne, "James Murray," *DCB*, vol. IV, pp. 574-578; Wetherell, "General James Murray and British Canada," pp. 274-334.
15. Vaudreuil complained on one occasion that "I was surprised [to find] that no sooner had your news reached me than it had spread throughout the town." [Vaudreuil to Dumas, 1 June 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas en 1760," *Rapport concernant les Archives Canadiennes pour l'année 1905*, volume I. Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1906, [hereafter RAPC, 1905], p. 39.]
16. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition against Quebec in the year one thousand seven hundred & fifty nine and from the surrender being the 18th day of Sept. 1759 to the 17th May 1760, also a journal from the 18th May to the 17th Sept. following..." NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol. 1, f. 62.
17. Anne-Joseph-Hippolyte de Maures de Malartic, *Journal des Campagnes au Canada de 1755 - 1760*. Dijon: L. Damidot, 1890, p. 305.
18. This "scandalous traffic," he continued, which "was practised throughout the whole winter between the English and the French, whom one would have taken for merchants rather than for military . . . greatly enriched private individuals, and procured to the rich delicacies and refreshments." [James Johnstone, *Memoirs of the Chevalier de Johnstone*, vol. 3, Charles

- Winchester, ed. and trans., Aberdeen: D. Wyllie & Sons, 1871, pp.53, 54].
19. John Knox, *An Historical Journal of the Campaigns in North America for the Years 1757, 1758, 1759, and 1760*, volume II. London, 1779, reprinted Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1915, p. 145.
  20. J.F. Boshier, J.-C. Dube, "Frangois Bigot," *DCB*, vol.IV, pp.59-71.
  21. Bigot to Levis, 10 October 1759, H.-R. Casgrain, ed., *Lettres de l'intendant Bigot au Chevalier de Levis*. Quebec: L.-J. Demers & Frere, 1895, pp.67-68. "It is certain," he added three days later, "that everyone in the government of Quebec is celebrating the opportunity to sell something to them [the British] for hard cash." [Bigot to Levis, 13 October 1759, *ibid.*, pp.69-70.]
  22. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.230. Both of these officers were fluently bilingual. When James Barbutt fell ill and returned to England in 1761, he acted as a personal emissary from Murray to William Pitt, and carried both dispatches and gifts for the Pitt family. In the winter of 1759-1760, Cramahe was also acting as Murray's secretary. After the conquest, he remained in Canada where he served as civil secretary to Governors James Murray, Guy Carleton and Frederick Haldimand, and ended his career as lieutenant-governor of the province of Quebec. [Pierre Tousignant, Madeleine Dionne-Tousignant, "Hector Theophilus Cramahe," *DCB*, vol.IV, pp.787-793.]
  23. "Pichon's Memoir relating to his services in Nova Scotia," 27 June 1756, in Webster, *Thomas Pichon*, p.121.
  24. Goods found in the storehouses of the Intendant and the Commissary of New France included brandy, wine, salt, sugar, weapons, hardware, cutlery, clocks, watches, furs, cloth, clothing, shoes, an assortment of trinkets, and gold, silver, and copper lace. [Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, pp.144-145, 324-325.] British military intelligence was thus financed by the supplies transported to Canada at great expense by the French crown. Without captured stores, Murray, who was compelled to borrow specie from his troops since he lacked "in the military chest a sufficiency to defray the contingent expenses of the garrison," could not have assembled the capital needed to finance an espionage system. [Murray, "Journal of the Expedition against Quebec," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, f.62.]
  25. British agents could thus plausibly claim that they had acquired their merchandise from private individuals. The British merchants resident in Quebec, together with their employees, formed a volunteer company, "about one hundred in number" at the time of the French siege. See Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, p.389.
  26. Failure to comply with these regulations could result in arrest and imprisonment. See Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, pp.157, 321; Murray, "Journal of the Expedition against Quebec," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, ff.52,71.
  27. Itinerant merchants were a common sight in Canadian parishes in the mid-eighteenth century. See Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740-1840*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985, pp. 140-142.
  28. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.228.
  29. Vaudreuil to Levis, 13 October 1759, H.-R. Casgrain, ed., *Lettres du marquis de Vaudreuil au Chevalier de Levis*. Quebec: L.-J. Demers & Frere, 1895, p.124.
  30. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.229.
  31. Dumas to Vaudreuil 4 April 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, pp.23-24.
  32. Dumas to Vaudreuil 5 June 1760, *ibid.*, pp.30-31.
  33. There were, she said, "continuously flying camps to harass the enemy. They were not safe beyond the gates of Quebec. Mr.Murray, Governor of the town, found himself more than once on the verge of losing his liberty, and had it not been for traitors ("faux freres") this would have been accomplished." [Legardeur de Repentigny, "Relation de ce qui s'est passe au Siege de Quebec," p. 12]. Given that word of these suspicions never reached the French authorities, rumours of treason among the Canadians may not have begun to circulate until after the war.
  34. The names of these agents did not appear in documents until several years after the end of the war. In wartime correspondence, agents are either not mentioned at all, or concealed behind rubrics like "spies" or "One of our friends." See Murray to Pitt, 25 May 1760, CO 5, vol.64, f.23; Cramahe to Murray, 30 July 1760, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.77.
  35. Cyprien Tanguay, *Dictionnaire Genealogique des Familles Canadiennes depuis lafondation de la colonie jusqu'd nos jours*, cinquieme volume. Montreal: Eusebe Senecal & Fils, 1888, pp.151-152.
  36. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.222.
  37. *Ibid.*
  38. *Ibid.*, f.223; James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, f.74.
  39. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, ff.74-75.
  40. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, ff.222-223.
  41. A chain of trading posts on the lower St. Lawrence and Saguenay Rivers.
  42. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.222; J.-J. Ahern, G. Ahern, *Notes pour servir a l'histoire de la medecine dans le Bas-Canada*, pp.344-348.
  43. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, f.77.

44. Jose Igartua, "Barthelemy Martin," in Frances G. Halpenny, ed., *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, volume III, 1741 to 1770. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974, p.435.
45. *Ibid.*; Alice Jean E. Lunn, *Developpment economique de la nouvelle jranee, 1713-1760*. Montreal: Les presses de l'universite de Montreal, 1986, p. 149.
46. Vaudreuil to Bigot, 25 March 1760, France, Archives des Colonies, [hereafter AC], F#, vol.16, f.75, NAC, MG 1, microfilm, reel F-392; Memoir of Barthelemy Martin, 24 March 1760, AC, C11A, vol.105, F.121, NAC, MG1, microfilm, reel F-105.
47. Vaudreuil to the minister, 23 April 1760, AC, F3, vol.16, ff.26-26v.
48. W.J. Eccles, "Francois-Pierre de Rigaud de Vaudreuil," *DCB*, vol.IV, pp.660-674.
49. A *miserable* was an undefined but very small volume of liquid, probably equivalent to seven millilitres. See Lester A. Ross, *Archaeological Metrology: English, French, American and Canadian Systems of Weights and Measures for North American Historical Archaeology*. Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1983, p.74; MarcelTrudel, *Initiation dlaNouvelle-France: histoire et institutions*. Montreal: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, p.238.
50. Letter of Vaudreuil, 21 March 1760, AC, CI LA, vol.105, f.132.
51. A *quart* in this context was probably a barrel containing about one hundred and fifty litres of liquid. See Ross, *Archaeological Metrology*, p.74; Trudel, *Initiation dlaNouvelle-France*, p.238.
52. Vaudreuil to the minister, 28 June 1760, AC, CI 1A, vol.105, ff.117-118.
53. Memoir of Barthelemy Martin, 24 March 1760, AC, C11A, vol.105, f.121.
54. *Ibid.* See also Vaudreuil to Bigot, 25 March 1760, AC, F3, vol. 16, f.75. Although acquiring the brandy was ostensibly Martin's primary objective, at some point prior to his departure, he was very probably asked to procure supplies of salt and other goods needed by the French army for the Quebec campaign. See Dumas to Vaudreuil, 3 April 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, p.23.
55. There is a three per cent discrepancy, probably caused by the conversion from British to French units of measure, between the 8,000 gallons (36,400 litres) which Barbutt and Cramahe sold to Martin, and the 250 *quarts* (37,500 litres) which Martin resold to the French. See Murray, "Answers ... to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.230; Ross, *Archaeological Metrology*, p.49.
56. Vaudreuil to the minister, 28 June 1760, AC, CI 1A, vol.105, f.117.
57. Vaudreuil to Dumas, 7 March 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, pp.4-5.
58. Dumas to Vaudreuil 9 March 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, p. 13.
59. Tache appears in French documents in March and April of 1760 as a person travelling between Quebec and Jacques Cartier. See Dumas to Vaudreuil 18 March 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, p. 15.
60. Dumas to Vaudreuil, 22 March 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, p. 18.
61. A *minot* of salt was a measure of dry capacity equivalent to 52.03 litres. See Ross, *Archaeological Metrology*, p.69.
62. Dumas to Vaudreuil 3 April 1760, "Lettres de Vaudreuil, de Levis et Dumas," *RAPC*, 1905, p.23. At some point, probably after the lifting of the French siege, Martin himself travelled to Quebec. See Vaudreuil to Dumas, 1 June 1760, *ibid.*, p.40.
63. Levis, *Journal*, p.258.
64. Levis to Vaudreuil, 28 April 1760, Casgrain, ed., *Lettres du Chevalier de Levis*, p. 292; Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, p.388. The survivor, a sergeant of the French artillery, was so afflicted by cold and exposure that he was unable to speak until two hours after his rescue. Then, "the poor man, shaken and frightened by the risks he had just run, was in no state to dissemble; he said frankly that he was one of the gunners from the army that was two leagues from Quebec." [Legardeur de Repentigny, "Relation de ce qui s'est passe au Siege de Quebec," pp.15-16.]
65. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, f.86.
66. *Ibid.*,
67. *Ibid.*, ff.88-89. On 18 April, a British officer noted in his journal that "A report prevails today, that this garrison will actually, in a short time, be besieged by the whole force of Canada." [Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, p.376].
68. Murray to Amherst, 30 April 1760, CO 5, vol.58 (II), f. 33, NAC, MG 11, microfilm, reel B-2172.
69. Murray, "Answers ... to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, ff.229-230.
70. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, ff.88-89; Murray to Pitt, 25 May 1760, CO 5, vol.64, ff.19v-20. Murray planned ultimately to confront Levis from behind a line of entrenchments on the high ground just east of Quebec known as the Buttes a Neveu.
71. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, ff.88-89, 90-91, 92-93.
72. Malcolm Fraser, *Extract from a Manuscript Journal relating to the Operations before Quebec in 1759*. Quebec: Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, 1866, p.29.
73. Levis, *Journal*, p.259. Levis appears to have originally contemplated landing somewhere between Cap Rouge and Quebec. But reports of new British fortifications at the mouth of the Cap Rouge led him to decide to land at St. Augustin.
74. James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, ff.93-95.
75. Murray to Amherst, 30 April 1760, CO 5, vol.58 (II), f.33.
76. Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol.1, ff.95-95; Stacey, *Quebec, 1759*, pp. 165-169.
77. Throughout this campaign, the distribution of brandy was supervised by Levis himself. The French army consumed about half of the brandy that had been

- accumulated for the expedition, and carried off the remaining one hundred and fifty *quarts* when the siege was lifted. See Vaudreuil to the minister, 28 June 1760, AC, C11A, vol.105, f.118.
78. Murray to Pitt, 25 May 1760, CO 5, vol.64, f.23.
79. "Memoire sur l'etat actuel de la Commission etabli pour la liquidation des dettes du Canada," 1762, AC, C11A, vol.105, ff.387, 389; Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.230.
80. Murray to Cramahe, 28 October 1765, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.2, f.270; Igartua, "Barthelemy Martin," *DCB*, vol.III, p.435.
81. "Noms, Qualites et demeures des temoins bons a entendre," 6 December 1761 to 21 March 1764, France, Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal, Archives de la Bastille: Affaire du Canada, vol.12142, ff.76, 77v, NAC, MG 7, II, microfilm, reel F-1104.
82. Murray to Samuel Martin, 8 August 1761, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.106.
83. *Ibid.*, ff.105-106.
84. James S. Pritchard, "Theodore-Matthieu Denys de Vitre," *DCB*, vol.IV, pp.209-210; Pritchard, "Augustin Raby," *DCB*, vol.IV, p.650.
85. Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol. 1, ff.60, 72, 74-75, 77-78; Murray to Hussey, 22 November 1759, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol. 1, f. 12; "Instructions from His Excellency General Murray [to] Capt. Ince of the 35th Regt of Foot Commanding . . . Point Levi[s]," March 1760, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.1, ff.21-22.
86. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, f.229.
87. These reports were correct, but shortages of provisions compelled Levis to defer the campaign until the spring. See Levis, *Journal*, p.240.
88. Although his agents warned Murray that an attack would come within days, it was the prisoner from the St. Lawrence who informed the British that the French strike would occur within hours. See James Murray, "Journal of the Expedition," NAC, Murray Papers, series 4, vol. 1, f.93; Knox, *Historical Journal*, II, p.388.
89. Murray, "Answers . . . to the various articles of Complaint," 1767, NAC, Murray Papers, series 1, vol.3, ff.229-230.
90. *Ibid.*, f.230. Although Murray refers to "intelligence" in general, the context of this statement makes it clear that Murray is referring specifically to intelligence gained through espionage.
91. W.J. Eccles, "The Battle of Quebec: A Reappraisal," in Alf Andrew Heggoy, ed., *The French Colonial Historical Society: Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting*. Athens, Georgia: The French Colonial Historical Society, 1978, pp.70-81; Eccles, "The Role of the American Colonies in Eighteenth Century French Foreign Policy," in *Atti del I Congresso internazionale de Storia Americana*. Genoa: Casa Editrice Tilgher-Genova, 1978, pp.163-173; Guy Fregault, *La guerre de la conquete*. Montreal: Fides,

1955; Francis Jennings, *Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies & Tribes in the Seven Years War in America*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1988; George F.G. Stanley, "The Defence of Canada During the Seven Years' War: A Military Appreciation," in Michael Cross and Robert Bothwell, eds. *Policy by Other Means: Essays in Honour of C.P. Stacey*. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1972, pp.51-76; Ian K. Steele, *Guerrillas and Grenadiers: The Struggle for Canada, 1689-1760*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969.

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