

Arrow Major Factor When Simonds Quit

Lt.-Gen. G. G. Simonds, former chief of the Canadian General Staff, rallied to the aid of Prime Minister Diefenbaker last night with the public admission that a principal reason for his own retirement was his disagreement with the Arrow program.

Gen. Simonds retired in a storm of controversy in June, 1955, to be replaced by Maj-Gen. Howard Graham, a man three years his senior. Reasons for his retirement were never made public.

Last night, following an address at a regimental dinner of The Governor-General's Horse Guards in University Armouries, he admitted the Liberal government's decision to go ahead with the development of the Avro Arrow was "a contributing factor."

Other contributing factors were:

general disagreement with the federal government's defense policy. This included, "the lack of a defense policy of any comprehensive variety" and the need for national service in the armed forces to provide a reserve of trained manpower to back up the regular forces.

He said the Liberal government had fallen completely under the spell of senior air force officers who, mistakenly, were following "the hideous example set for them by officers in the United States Air Force."

He said these U.S. officers, impressed with the overwhelming strength of the allied air forces in 1944-45, had completely overlooked the fact that this force no longer existed.

Gen. Simonds then turned his attention to the defense policy

of the present Diefenbaker Government.

"All I want is a comprehensive defense policy," he said. "Defense Minister Peckes hasn't got one. He never had one in all the years I have known him and he hasn't got one now. And he won't present one in the sittings of the present house."

In his address to the regimental and former officers of the GGHG, Gen. Simonds said 1960 would be the crucial year in present international affairs with the present Berlin crisis likely to emerge as "the Munich" of the Third World War.

"I have watched the Russian buildup," he said, "and I see their strength will reach a peak in 1960. Also, that is a year of presidential elections — a time when no political decision of consequences can be made for 12 to 16 months."

"In addition, the United States has a seriously ill president and an equally sick secretary-of-state."

With May 27 the critical date in the present Berlin dispute, Gen. Simonds was convinced the Russians would prove to the world on May Day that their claim to possession of an inter-continental ballistic missile of great accuracy and range was no idle boast.

"And," he said, "they will demonstrate that they have plenty of them."

The Russians would then allow two to three weeks for this display to sink in and, then, "what will they do?" The West World would thus be faced with three alternatives:

"A modern Munich by us, with retreat and concessions, but how will we use the time gained";

A refusal to compromise and an attempt to "shoot our way" to Berlin without adequate conventional forces to back our attempt in the face of enormous Russian satellite forces; and;

A thermonuclear assault with disastrous consequences for the world at large at a time when the West no longer possessed a preponderance of thermonuclear force.

Gen. Simonds said it was his opinion no politician would risk a decision for thermonuclear war when he knew his own people would face equally disastrous consequences.

He called for a form of compulsory military service to back up Canada's regular forces, which, he said, were the equal of any army units in the world today.

He added: "The Arrow, to me, was destined to be obsolete before it was ever started. Today, however, it serves to direct public opinion away from the real issues with which we will be confronted in the next year."

"Certainly the Russians don't want war — if they can gain their ends without it. But it would be a great mistake to think, now that they have neutralized our advantage in thermonuclear weapons, that they won't take the risks involved in war in the months ahead."

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