

Green also thought it important that Canada be represented in francophone Africa, a region likely to interest French Canadians and one full of potential UN allies. The former Belgian Congo (later Zaire), where the UN sent a peacekeeping force with a large Canadian contingent in 1960, quickly became important, and a consulate general was opened in 1960, succeeded by an embassy in 1962. The number of ex-colonies was soon so great that the Department had to resort to the expedient of non-resident representation. A mission was opened in Cameroon in 1962, which covered off several states; posts in Ghana and Nigeria represented Canada in other countries.

The continuing instability of the Middle East in the wake of the 1956 Suez Crisis (when Canada sent a large peacekeeping force to Gaza and Sinai) kept that area in the forefront of departmental thinking. A mission was opened in Iran in 1958 and resident ambassadors were sent to Lebanon and Israel. Margaret Meagher, in Israel, became Canada's first woman ambassador in 1958.

The Conservative government was also interested in Latin America. Concern that a Latin American common market might harm Canadian trade interests in that quarter of the globe, combined with the region's heightened strategic significance following Fidel Castro's triumph in Cuba in 1959, meant that there were good reasons for Canada to increase its representation. As a result, an embassy was opened in Costa Rica in 1961 and accredited to Honduras, Panama, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. Beginning in September 1961, Guatemala was covered from Mexico City. As well, Ecuador was covered from Colombia, Bolivia from Peru, and Uruguay and Paraguay from Argentina.

The Department's experiences with multiple accreditation also proved attractive in Asia, where, in 1961, the government employed the high commissioner in Malaya to represent Canada in Thailand, an increasingly important recipient of Canadian aid.

Government restraint programs meant that the Department was at times short-staffed, even though the number of officers grew by 61 between 1957 and 1962. This placed a certain strain on the Department, even affecting the scheduled opening of some new missions. Recruitment of francophones continued to be a problem, and it was not until later in the 1960s that measures to increase the representation of francophones in the Department—and indeed, throughout the civil service—were implemented.



⁴⁰ Margaret Meagher became Canada's first female ambassador in 1958, when she was sent to Israel. She is shown here in 1958 inspecting troops in Jerusalem. (Source: Library and Archives Canada, PA-187692)