

# Growing up with Eayrs

by Tobias Fisher

*Growing up Allied* is the fourth volume of the *In Defence of Canada* series, and extends Professor Eayrs pre-eminence in the field of Canada's defence and foreign policy into the Cold War era. The eight years from 1947 to 1955 studied in this volume, cover Canada's participation in the conception, birth and troubled childhood of NATO.

The author is no less specific with his point of view. This is history at the inner circle, where the ideas of mandarins and ministers mix and meld to form policy. The names of the politicians, bureaucrats and diplomats will be familiar: Pearson, Claxton, Heeney, Robertson, Foulkes, Wrong, Reid and Wilgress. Eayrs allows this "policy community" to speak for itself in carefully arranged primary sources which take up fully 75 per cent of the book. The organization of the material must have been a formidable task requiring an elaborate cross-file index. It is to the author's great credit that he has managed to marshal the relevant material and present it in a flowing prose.

Even more than in his previous volumes Eayrs is reluctant to insert his own observations and opinions. The approach is less justifiable with this volume than in the earlier ones. When Eayrs began the series, there was virtually no literature in the field. His first volume pioneered the subject and that in itself guaranteed the book a place of honour in Canadian historical writing. This is not the case for the story of the early years of NATO. Canadian participants (notably Lester Pearson and Escott Reid) have already told much of the story. What is needed now is a greater degree of analysis than Eayrs has provided. Instead, he reserves his comments to terse and sometimes puzzling chapter conclusions. Following a quotation making a rather harsh judgment of Lester Pearson, Eayrs asks: "Is it justifiable? The verdict is left for the statesman's biographers to deliver. 'Biography is about chaps': national security studies are (mostly) about gaps." This is taking the easy way out.

---

Mr. Fisher is an Ottawa-based journalist.

The neutral approach leaves the reader to make his own judgments, but the density of ideas expressed in the voluminous correspondence makes it difficult to form an overview. Occasionally the arguments become repetitive and split hairs.

It is ironic that 'the view from the top' should be so narrow. What were the domestic political considerations? What did parliament, the press and the Canadian public think of NATO and of Canadian troops serving in Europe so soon after the war? The public mood must have had some bearing on policy, but with the exception of Mackenzie King's reservations about Pearson's carefree "internationalism", we are left to make our own assumptions.

Canada as a 'middle power' takes on a second meaning in the book. Apart from our military status, there develops a variety of "special relationships" which allow Canada to serve as a go-between. Whether the dispute is between the U.K. and France over German rearmament, the U.K. and the U.S. over the Suez Canal or the 'big three' riding herd over the smaller allies, Pearson and his clique are invariably in the middle offering soothing words and compromise solutions and resolutions. To this day Canadians at NATO enjoy a reputation as neutral 'fixers'.

Although *Growing Up Allied* does not convey the mood of the time, we do get a good look at the policy making process and the policy makers. The process took the form of a high-level written debate. Reports coming in from the various diplomats were subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the External Affairs department and passed along to the Minister and Cabinet. Comments and instructions would return to the field by the same route.

## Disputes

There was generally consensus within the "policy community", but occasionally disputes arose, as when assistant under-secretary Escott Reid drafted instructions for the Canadian representative at the treaty negotiations, Hume Wrong. A copy of Reid's instructions which embodied his high-minded ideal of a "spiritual