

them more acceptable from our point of view," he observed in June 1956. "Our policy should be directed toward encouraging independence from Moscow while making it clear that we have no aggressive intentions and no intentions of radically altering their present social and political systems." [Document 522]

East Europe, nevertheless, wanted change. By the fall of 1956, popular unrest in the satellites had thrown up "nationalist" Communist governments in Poland and Hungary. In late October, as the world watched in amazement, Hungarian intellectuals and students forced Soviet troops to retreat from Budapest. Moscow's response was swift and brutal. Tanks and troops quickly crushed the poorly armed rebels and installed a puppet government. "The mistake of the rebels, and of [Premier Imre] Nagy for trying to keep pace with their demands," the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, Jules Léger, explained, "was in trying to go too far and too fast." [Document 463] With Pearson preoccupied with extracting Britain and France from their misadventures in the Middle East, Canada simply followed Washington's lead, condemning Moscow's behaviour by passing one futile United Nations resolution after another. These small gestures of support for the Hungarian people, which were won only after protracted struggles with the Afro-Asian delegations in New York, left many feeling bitter and betrayed. "I think we must agree," concluded Ford, "that the action of the UN on Hungary was largely a failure.... The one lesson that might profitably have been learned by the Arab-Asian group concerning the nature of the Soviet system has been obstinately refused." [Document 506]

Canada's response to the flood of Hungarian refugees that spilled across Europe in the wake of the crisis was equally uninspired. As the documents in chapter two make clear, Ottawa's reaction was slow and hesitant. Pearson insisted that the government match the outpouring of domestic and international support for the refugees but found the going tough. He urged J.W. Pickersgill, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to accept more refugees and he pressed Cabinet for additional resources. But more often than not, he was rebuffed and defeated. Cabinet hesitated to test the country's capacity to absorb the refugees, and it proved sceptical and unsupportive of UN efforts in Europe.

In contrast, Canadian policy toward Poland was more engaged and dynamic. The fate of the moderately nationalist Communist government in Poland was all the more important in view of the Soviet Union's intervention in Hungary. "The success of the Poles in establishing and maintaining a measure of independence in their internal affairs," Léger observed in late November 1956, "will provide the key to Soviet policy in Eastern Europe." Pearson agreed, and Canada set out to "wean Poland gently away from its dependence on Moscow." [Document 569] Canadian diplomats tried to normalize relations with Poland, resolve the long-standing dispute over the Polish Art Treasures, and bolster the Polish economy with much-needed financial credits.

The persistence of the Cold War meant that defence and security questions continued to dominate Canada's relations with the United States. The tensions between national and continental approaches to North American air defence, already an important theme in Volume 21, intensified sharply in 1956-57. In January 1956, Ottawa learned that Washington wanted permission to deploy nuclear weapons over Canada. A month later, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff asked Ottawa for its views on the feasibility of fully integrating the two countries' air defence systems. General Charles Foulkes, chairman of the Chiefs of Staff, was anxious to meet American demands but