

INTRODUCTION

In 1954, preoccupied with the internal struggle over Stalin's succession, Soviet leaders abandoned the more virulent aspects of their anti-Western campaign and continued their efforts to seek an accommodation with the United States and its allies in the Far East and in Europe. Along the Korean peninsula, the armistice negotiated the year before held fast. In Europe, a strong and confident North Atlantic alliance consolidated its position when the conditions for West Germany's rearmament were elaborated in a series of conferences in London and Paris. For Robert Ford, who returned from Moscow early in the spring of 1954, these were reassuring developments:

[P]eace, or at least a state of 'cold war', which passes for peace these days, can be maintained. This does not necessarily mean that either side abandons its hopes that eventually some or all of the rest of the world can be converted to its way of life. But it does mean that it should be possible to eliminate war as a means of bringing about changes (Document 693).

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, Lester B. Pearson, was not as sanguine about the prospects for peace. The most that could be said about 1954, he concluded in December, was "that the gravest disturbances ... remained potential rather than actual; threats of deterioration which were, at least temporarily, successfully averted."¹ That Ford and Pearson should differ in their assessments of 1954 is hardly surprising, for the transition from the first, crisis-filled phase of the Cold War to a more stable, yet still dangerous, world order, was at best uncertain, containing confusing elements of the past and the future.

These themes take up much of the chapter on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and are closely associated with German rearmament and the struggle for strategic advantage in central Europe (Chapter 3, Sections 2, 3 and 4). Throughout the year, the alliance was forced to reply to repeated Soviet efforts to defuse tension in Europe through the neutralization of Germany. Spurred on by the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, NATO responded by tenaciously seeking to incorporate West Germany into the alliance. Like most of their allied colleagues, Canadian policy-makers were sceptical of Moscow's interest in reaching a European settlement and were prepared to accept the 'grand strategy' worked out in Washington, London and Paris. However, Ottawa insisted on being consulted, and from the Canadian perspective, the significance of the discussions on the Soviet overtures and the European Defence Community lay in Pearson's continuing efforts to turn NATO into a forum for genuine inter-allied consultation.

The prospective incorporation of West Germany into the North Atlantic alliance provoked a spasm of outrage in Moscow. At the United Nations, the Soviet delegation sponsored three anti-American propaganda items in the General Assembly, which ended its ninth session on a sour note as a result. Still, as the documents in this volume make clear, there was no obscuring the optimism that resulted from the United Nations' success in disarmament matters, a subject that absorbed two-thirds of the General Assembly's time. The unanimity with which the world organization agreed on resolutions to revive stalled disarmament talks (Documents 138 to 166)

¹ Lester B. Pearson, "New Year's Message by the Secretary of State for External Affairs," *Statements and Speeches* No. 54/61.