

## Foreword

The main function of the Department of External Affairs is the protection and advancement of Canadian interests abroad. How that responsibility was discharged during 1950 is set forth, in some detail, in the different chapters of this report. From these detailed and dispersed accounts, however, it may not emerge clearly or with sufficient emphasis that the paramount Canadian interest abroad is the maintenance of international peace and security. During the past year that problem has become much more difficult and anxious. Consequently, the attention of the Department has had to be devoted increasingly to the active consideration of all the measures by which peace could be secured in the face of a danger which is world-wide and which manifests itself in many different ways. The policy of a country of the strength of Canada can never be decisive in determining the issues of peace or war. But, in a situation of such tragic division and danger as exists at present, it is essential that every decision of the Government in its external relations should be taken deliberately and wisely and in the fullest possible knowledge of the facts. Only thus can we ensure that such power and influence as Canada possesses is used to further the cause of peace and freedom.

At the beginning of 1950 it was clear that we were entering on a period of great tension. By its refusal to co-operate in working out a peaceful settlement of the problems which had been left by the Second Great War and by the provocative acts of expansion in which it had indulged since hostilities ended, the Soviet Union had revealed itself as a dangerous threat to peace and to the independence of free peoples everywhere. Moreover, there had occurred in 1949 an enormous accession of strength to the forces of Communist imperialism by reason of the Communist victory in China. In spite of the success of the European Recovery Programme in strengthening Western Europe against possible Soviet aggression, the loss of China, it was clear, would result in a very heavy net increase in Communist power throughout the world. Nevertheless, in January, 1950, there were grounds for cautious optimism. The nations of the North Atlantic area had joined together in the North Atlantic Treaty to set a barrier to the piece-meal conquest of Western Europe by the Soviet Union and were already taking steps to increase their forces in being. The atomic explosion in the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1949 had led to a mounting sense of urgency; but it was felt that the U.S.S.R. was not yet prepared to initiate or support aggressive action which might involve the risk of a general war. If during the next three years the free peoples of the world energetically increased their defences so that the disparity in ground and air forces was not so overwhelmingly in favour of the Soviet Union and its satellites, it was hoped