

Pearson in the postwar decade helping keep the cold war cold

By George Ignatieff

Goethe said: "The best thing we get out of history is the enthusiasm it rouses." *Mike*, Volume II, is the kind of history that rouses enthusiasm in layman and scholar alike. For here we find history that tells us how it came about that Canada played such an active and constructive part in preventing catastrophe during the critical decade when the nations, having caught a glimpse of "One World" through the creation of the United Nations, had to live through the bitter disillusionment of having to adjust to a world divided by the Cold War. It is a success story — a Canadian success story.

This volume, in fact, covers only that part of L. B. Pearson's story in which his success was most conspicuous: the period from that day in September 1948 when he became Secretary of State for External Affairs until December 1957, when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This event, which, in a sense, set the mark of international recognition for the achievements of Mr. Pearson, arouses not only

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enthusiasm but a legitimate curiosity, how such recognition came to the Canadian to win this award, which is most highly esteemed by those who work for peace.

Volume II suffers from the disadvantage of having been the product of an editorial group, who had to work mostly on an uncompleted text. The fact that the reader's curiosity is satisfied by what made Mr. Pearson one of the great international statesmen of this century is a tribute to the painstaking care that has gone into the assembling and editing of Mr. Pearson's material, which represents an important contribution to Canadian and international history in this fascinating period of transition from one world to a bipolar world, from universalism to regionalism.

Knowing that his days were numbered, L. B. Pearson wrote the truth as he saw it, without fear or favour, in a sense of justifying himself. As Geoffrey explains, only five of the 11 chapters were written by Pearson himself. Munro and Alex Inglis, however, have done such a sensitive job in editing the rest of the material garnered from letters and memoranda, that the scholars and laymen are indebted to them and to Pearson for preserving as much as possible the full impact of Mr. Pearson's thoughts and words. They come through with a stark reality without suffering from the fate of most diplomatic memoirs, of being polished, over-tactful omissions and justifications.

The guideposts of Canada's postwar foreign policy are both clearly marked and explained. So are the alternatives to "participatory internationalism", as Mr. Pearson called his brand of creative diplomacy, which gave Canada a decade of leadership on the forefront of international statecraft.

Faced with the division of the world into two adversary power blocs, with the United States and the Soviet Union each striving for hegemony over its respective region (with Canada in the middle)