

Foreign Policy

AN INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT

Commons External Affairs and Defence Committee was then conducting hearings and has since produced its own report on the subject. But above all was the pervasive reality that the unique relationship Canada has with its continental neighbor is a factor in the consideration of Canada's relations with every other part of the world.

The new policy was presented to the Canadian people in a package of six booklets* ranging in length from 16 to 38 pages—one over-all statement, plus five devoted respectively to Europe, the United Nations, the Pacific, Latin America, and international development. The Prime Minister took a close interest in the formulation and framing of the policy, an interest that is clearly reflected not just in the views but even in some of the language employed in the final product.

Was the exercise worthwhile? Undoubtedly yes. Even if it had not opened up new avenues, nor articulated new ideas nor even lent credence to the established policies—in fact, the new directions it suggests are few and far between—nevertheless the expenditure of time, money and effort would have been worthwhile. The Prime Minister got a demonstration of conceptualization, and appears satisfied with it. While the general public probably remained largely unaffected, many Canadians with an interest in foreign policy, among them teachers, journalists and businessmen, were given a greater sense of involvement in the shaping of Canadian relations with the rest of the world. And last,

but by no means least, it provided the executors of Canadian foreign policy with an opportunity to perceive their activities in the broadest possible context of Canadian official expression, and more particularly to show their capacity and concern with making foreign policy, in the words of the report, "an extension abroad of national policies."

Changes in orientation

What specific innovations or changes in orientation have resulted from the foreign policy review? The former are still few in number, the latter difficult to assess. One thing that does appear evident is a greater degree of realism concerning Canada's capability as a member of the world community, in contrast to the more euphoric idealism that tended to characterize Canadian attitudes and activities when she took her place on the world stage in the years following World War II. Her contribution as a helpful fixer, whether as a mediator or participant in peace-keeping operations, has been reconsidered, and a new note of caution emerges in that connection.

There are frequent references to the necessity of preserving Canadian sovereignty, reflecting again the sensitive awareness in Canada of her giant neighbor, and the restrictions on Canada's freedom of action that flows from the interdependence of the two countries. But there is none of the chauvinistic anti-Americanism that so often marks debates on Canadian-American relations north of the border. There is rather a clear desire to assess the facts as they exist, and to pursue Canada's natural interest within that context. One can expect greater efforts to develop relations with the rest of the

world as a counterweight to American influence, and to demonstrate Canadian independence by adopting policies different from, and even at apparent odds with, those of the United States, such as the establishment of diplomatic relations with mainland China. However, in such instances as well, realism seems to be the keynote. While the two countries might not always adopt similar policies, "the United States is Canada's closest friend and ally," the authors of *Foreign Policy for Canadians* have written, "and will remain so."

Toward a greater cohesiveness

In other areas, Canada will remain in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for the foreseeable future; she will increase her aid to developing nations as fast as her economy will permit; she will continue her quest for a more effective role vis-à-vis Latin America without joining the Organisation of American States for the moment; and she will give higher priority to economic and commercial considerations in foreign policy. To give greater cohesiveness to Canada's international activities, an attempt will be made to integrate all the Government services with foreign operations.

The dust has not settled in the East Block and the other buildings in Ottawa where Canadian foreign policy is formulated. Nor is it likely to do so in the near future. The new approach to policy planning that has been adopted, including the establishment of a policy analysis group, should guarantee that the review was not a one-shot affair. Even without that, it is clear that in her foreign relations, Canada has entered a new phase.

* The booklets are available at 50 cents each, or the set of six for Can. \$3.00, from the Queen's Printer for Canada, Ottawa.