

INTRODUCTION

1961 was a year of crises, during which the world often seemed to be veering dangerously towards the brink of major conflict. The American-backed invasion of Cuba resulted in an embarrassing débâcle at the Bay of Pigs. In view of the worsening situation in Laos, Canada was reluctantly forced to agree that it was necessary for the International Commission for Supervision and Control (I.C.S.C.) to reconvene. The difficulties encountered by the United Nations peacekeeping force in the Congo were intensified after the death of U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in a plane crash on the night of September 17-18. But the most dramatic and significant political event of 1961 was the erection of the Berlin Wall in mid-August. Soon after East Berlin had been sealed off from contact with the West by the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Soviets resumed nuclear testing on a large scale, exploding a 58-megaton device. The United States quickly followed suit, a decision that Canadian Prime Minister John Diefenbaker considered “preposterous” (Document 114).

Indeed, Diefenbaker's annoyance over many aspects of American foreign policy rose steadily during 1961. In February, he had a cordial meeting in Washington with the new American president, John F. Kennedy (see Document 320). However, Kennedy's visit to Ottawa in May (see Document 324) went less smoothly. The meeting left Diefenbaker convinced that Kennedy expected him to follow the American lead in foreign policy matters without question. In late August, the Prime Minister remarked bluntly that he was “tired of being told that he should not speak out on Berlin. ... After all, the *New York Times* was full of speeches by Senators and others giving their opinions and he was not prepared to sit in silence as if the Canadian Government had no views of its own. He was not prepared to be a tail on the United States kite” (Document 258).

Despite the heightening of tensions, Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, Howard Green, retained his faith in and dedication to the cause of disarmament. Green did manage to achieve some successes in this area. For example, since the failure of the Ten Nation Committee in the summer of 1960, Green had doggedly fought for a resumption of negotiations in a reconstituted committee. In December 1961, the United Nations finally adopted a resolution to this effect (see Document 139), leading to the creation of the Eighteen Nation Committee in the following year. However, the Americans expressed “serious disappointment” over Canada's decision to support a Swedish resolution calling for “non-nuclear club” – that is, a group of nations refusing to acquire nuclear weapons (Document 134).

Behind Green's campaign for disarmament and his support of the Swedish resolution lay his profound opposition to the ownership of nuclear weapons by Canada. In January, Clerk of the Privy Council Robert Bryce – who favoured acceptance of the weapons – wrote to Diefenbaker: “The chief difficulty is, of course, Mr. Green and this causes me serious concern, for I have much respect and affection for him, even when I cannot agree with him. I should be glad to help in any way I can in preparing memoranda for you to give him or in talking to those of his officials,