

INTRODUCTION

This is the second of two volumes covering the period January 1, 1956 to June 10, 1957, when Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent's Liberal government was defeated in a general election by John G. Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservative Party. Although it is clearly impossible to divide the period into two completely self-contained volumes, the editor and general editor have tried to keep together as much associated material as possible without departing too much from the thematic organization that has characterized earlier volumes in this series. At the same time, practical and budgetary considerations dictated that the two volumes be roughly similar in size. The earlier volume, published in June 2001, focused on the Suez Crisis and contained material on the Middle East, the United Nations, NATO and the Commonwealth. This volume covers relations with the United States, the Soviet Union and Europe, the Far East, and Latin America. It includes additional chapters on North Africa, atomic energy, and international multilateral economic relations.

The shifting character of the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union continued to preoccupy Canadian policy-makers for much of the period documented in this volume. Ottawa welcomed the easing of tensions that was signalled by Moscow's pursuit of "competitive co-existence" and was pleased when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin during the 20th Communist Party Congress in February 1956. "There can be little doubt that the myth of Stalin is being completely demolished," exulted Lester B. Pearson, the Secretary of State for External Affairs. "[N]ow the body of Stalin – like that of Oliver Cromwell, is, post-mortem, likely to be hanged, drawn and quartered." [Document 537] Though intrigued by these developments within the Soviet Union, Ottawa remained wary of Moscow's intentions. In the Department of External Affairs, R.A.D. Ford, the head of the European Division and Canada's foremost Soviet expert, warned grimly that "as the basic Soviet aims remain the same, the challenge from the USSR, while changed in character, remains strong and in some respects more dangerous than the nakedly aggressive policy of Stalin." [Document 536]

Canadian officials were sometimes unsure how to respond to this altered threat. This was especially true of Moscow's growing presence in the developing world. Ford and A.E. Ritchie, the head of the Economic Division, disagreed strongly over Western and Canadian strategy for countering new Soviet initiatives in Africa and Asia. [Document 539] Canadian policy-makers were united, however, when it came to dealing directly with the Soviet Union and its East European satellites. Everyone thought it sensible to conclude a trade agreement with Moscow and sell Canadian wheat to the USSR for cash. There was also broad agreement on the need to seize control of the bilateral agenda and prevent Moscow from defining the relationship. "It was not sufficient for us merely to reciprocate visits proposed by the Soviet Government," Pearson told his Cabinet colleagues. "We must take the initiative ourselves in fields of special interest to us, in order, among other things, to forestall undesirable initiatives from them." [Document 508]

More important, the relaxation of Soviet policy prompted the Department of External Affairs to conduct a comprehensive review of the government's attitude toward the satellite states of Eastern Europe. In Ford's view, Canada should no longer ostracize the satellites to keep the Soviet Union on the defensive, but engage them more actively in economic, cultural, and information exchanges. "The regimes are not going to be overthrown, so we had better concentrate our efforts on trying to make