

In “Toronto the Good”, long derided for its uptight “White Anglo-Saxon Protestant” culture, Greek restaurants and tavernas spilled onto the sidewalks of Danforth Avenue, signalling an era of urban revival. The immigrant wave continued unabated in the 1960s, when a further 65,000 Greeks – many of them family members of those that had arrived in the 1950s – arrived on Canadian shores. The new arrivals embraced their new home but remained devoted to maintaining their religion, language, and ethnic identity, passing them to their children through language schools and regional associations, and keeping alive the ties to their native land.¹⁰

The Conservative government of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, elected in 1957, was anxious to build on these developing political and ethnic ties. In the late 1950s, Canadian Minister of Trade and Commerce Gordon Churchill visited Athens to invigorate commercial relations between Canada and Greece. Armed with a fiery temperament and a strong sense of honour, the veteran of both world wars was an ideal emissary to south-eastern Europe. In his own gruff manner, he impressed Greek officials, who welcomed a deepening of the relationship. In April 1961, Greek Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis paid a three-day visit to Ottawa to promote the Canada-Greece relationship, meeting with Diefenbaker and establishing a high-level



Prime Minister J. Diefenbaker with Greek Prime Minister C. Karamanlis at a North Atlantic Treaty Organization conference (December 1957) (Thanks to the University of Saskatchewan for providing the image and permitting its reproduction; MG01/XVII/JGD 4464)

dialogue over important political, economic, and immigration issues.

Canada’s diplomats were delighted and assured Diefenbaker that the Greek prime minister’s visit was prompted “by sincere friendship and close co-operation based upon a community of ideals, of civilization and of political interests”.¹¹

Love against Tyranny

The easy and harmonious partnership of the postwar period ended suddenly in the spring of 1967, when Greek military officers seized power amidst a climate of political instability. Handling the new regime was a real challenge for Prime Minister L.B. Pearson’s government, which found it dif-