

INTRODUCTION

This volume covers the period from the beginning of 1962 until the defeat of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's Conservative government on April 8, 1963. All other foreign policy controversies during this time were far eclipsed by the longstanding central issue in Canada–United States relations: whether or not Canada would accept American-made nuclear weapons on its soil. Diplomatic and public discussions on this matter had been ongoing since the creation of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) in 1957 and had taken on a new intensity in 1960. After something of a lull on the diplomatic front for much of 1962, the issue gained urgency in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962. Public opinion, formerly divided between pro- and highly vocal anti-nuclear sentiment, now veered more strongly towards acquisition. At a Cabinet meeting on October 30, it was decided to open negotiations with the US (Document 231).

Initially, Secretary of State for External Affairs Howard Green was optimistic that an arrangement could be worked out whereby a crucial part of the warheads would be kept in the United States and quickly transported to Canada in an emergency. Such a solution, he hoped, would satisfy both sides in the nuclear debate. When he and the Minister of National Defence, Douglas Harkness, met with US Secretary of State Dean Rusk and other American officials in Paris in December, the Americans appeared willing to consider this approach. Subsequently, however, Rusk informed Harkness that no such arrangement was feasible. Since this information was not passed on by Harkness to the Department of External Affairs, much confusion and miscommunication ensued. This volume prints for the first time records detailing the course of the unsuccessful negotiations, which include a defence of the “missing part” concept by Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson and other documents that describe an attempt by Canada to re-open talks in late February 1963, at a time when the question of nuclear weapons was a major issue in the bitterly fought federal election campaign (Documents 232, 233, 235-239, 242, 246-249).

The situation in Cuba and the missile crisis also played their part in embittering Canada–US relations. The announcement of extended US restrictions on trade with Cuba in February 1962 was not initially accompanied by any demand for similar action from Canada (Documents 603-605). Soon afterwards, however, Dean Rusk informed the Canadian Ambassador in Washington, Arnold Heeney, that the US intended “to take steps to ensure so far as possible that nothing was done to contribute to the strength of the Cuban economy.” The Americans believed “it was very important that the whole problem should be dealt with on a multilateral rather than a unilateral basis.” Rusk therefore expressed “his hope that ... we would wish to reconsider the Canadian long-range interest and the measures best calculated to protect the Canadian interest” (Document 609). Green, who now felt that his previous stance might have proved “unwise” in the light of Cuba's increasing closeness to the Soviet Union, agreed that it was time “to review the whole question of our relations with Cuba” (Document 611). As a result, comments on Canada's policy were