

The early months of 1950 also carried the turmoil of revolutionary Asia uncomfortably close to home. The Soviet Union's decision to boycott the United Nations as long as the Security Council refused to assign the "China seat" to the new Communist government led to dangerous deadlock. In the United States, the collapse of Nationalist China produced an unsettling wave of national hysteria that grew increasingly virulent as Senator Eugene McCarthy launched his campaign against "Communists in government." As even routine contacts between East and West ground to a halt in the winter and spring of 1950, Pearson tried to curb the drift towards confrontation. His efforts at mediation and his views on the deepening international crisis are documented in a compelling exchange of letters and memoranda with his close friend, Hume Wrong, Canada's ambassador to the United States. (Documents 224-231).

From the Western perspective, at least one result of the Soviet boycott was fortuitous: when North Korea invaded its southern neighbour on the morning of June 25, the Soviet Union's absence from the Security Council allowed the United States to lead the United Nations into action. Convinced that the attack was a Soviet-inspired challenge to the United Nations, whose prestige and authority were already ravaged by its inability to respond to Communist aggression in the late 1940s, Ottawa joined the international coalition after a series of lengthy and heated Cabinet discussions. At a time when Canada's economic and military strength was comparatively substantial, its reaction to this crisis mattered a great deal to both Canadians and their allies. This response revealed much about the attitudes of Canadian policy-makers to the country's role in the Cold War, and its relations with its principal allies and with the United Nations. As each successive stage of the conflict unfolded, Canada's attempt to be a moderating influence in the Western alliance became more sharply defined.⁵ With good reason, then, fully one-quarter of this volume documents Canada's involvement in the opening stages of the war and Ottawa's subsequent efforts to find a basis for peace.

While Korea is at the heart of only one chapter (Chapter 2), documentation on the crisis and its influence on Canadian policy is necessarily scattered throughout the entire volume. The war swept away the careful optimism that characterized Ottawa's international outlook during the first few months of the year. In a single stroke, the conflict transformed the Cold War from a tense but fairly stable diplomatic stand-off into a much more precarious and dangerous confrontation. It altered completely the context in which Canadian foreign policy was developed and implemented. The effects of the conflict in Asia, for example, dominated Canadian preparations for the UN's 5th General Assembly and forced the international organization to debate the status of Formosa and the nature of collective security (Chapter 3). The conflict also provided new impetus for proceeding with the long-delayed Japanese Peace Treaty (Chapter 11), determined Canada's attitude towards the International Red Cross (Chapter 4), and influenced the Commonwealth discussions on capital assistance (Document 7).

⁵ Greg Donaghy, "The Road to Constraint: Canada and the Korean War, June-December 1950", in John Hilliker and Mary Halloran, (eds.), *Diplomatic Documents and Their Users* (Ottawa: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1995).