

DIEFENBAKER, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN:  
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## ABSTRACT

John Diefenbaker's Latin American policy was based on his vision of Canada's national interest, which placed a strong emphasis on the achievement of greater autonomy in foreign policy for Canada vis-à-vis the US and the expansion of Canadian exports to the region. For Diefenbaker, an enhanced relationship with Latin America had the potential to lessen Canada's dependency on the US, while giving Latin American countries an outlet for their trade, commercial and financial relations other than the US. This new approach implied that Canada would formulate and implement policy that focused more on Canadian political interests and goals. It was not a matter of charting a totally independent policy for Canada in Latin America — true policy independence was impossible to achieve. Nor was it the case that Canada would necessarily set itself in opposition to the US when it disagreed with its policies. For Diefenbaker the goal was to pursue a foreign policy that was aligned with, but not subservient to, the US.

Ultimately, Diefenbaker's policies towards countries such as Cuba, Mexico, the Federation of the West Indies, Argentina and Brazil were somewhat successful in expanding Canadian trade and commercial activity beyond the United States, and in establishing a stronger political relationship between Canada and the Latin American region. The policies were remarkably consistent, reflecting Diefenbaker's desire to increase Canada's autonomy, and differentiated by his personal involvement in initiating policy at the Cabinet level and in building and cultivating relationships with Latin American leaders; the goal was to further Canadian economic and political interests in the region. Though there were possibilities for greater expansion and connections with Latin America that were missed, Diefenbaker's Latin American policy would be built upon and continued by successive Liberal and Conservative governments once he left office.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: THE FORMATIVE YEARS.....	25
CHAPTER 2: A GROWING AWARENESS.....	47
CHAPTER 3: DIEFENBAKER AND THE FEDERATION OF THE WEST INDIES...77	
CHAPTER 4: DIEFENBAKER AND MEXICO.....	98
CHAPTER 5: DIEFENBAKER AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES .....	120
CHAPTER 6: DIEFENBAKER AND BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA.....	143
CHAPTER 7: DIEFENBAKER AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION.....	166
CHAPTER 8: DIEFENBAKER AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS.....	185
CONCLUSION.....	202
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	207

## INTRODUCTION

A Populist in Foreign Affairs, Rogue Tory and Renegade in Power are but a few of the titles of books that purport to examine the life and career of John G. Diefenbaker, the thirteenth Prime Minister of Canada.<sup>1</sup> The inference in the titles is that this was a man who refused to follow convention and was not afraid to move in radically new policy directions — a rogue, a renegade, a populist. Diefenbaker's policy towards Latin America, while a subject given little attention by historians and writers, provides a useful example of Diefenbaker's embrace of the idea of Canada pursuing new directions in international affairs.

When it came to foreign affairs, Diefenbaker consistently applied the same criterion to his policy deliberations. He asked himself whether a particular policy was in Canada's national interest. The term "national interest" is a contested one but for the purposes of this study Steven Kendall Holloway's interpretation of the term will be used.<sup>2</sup> Holloway argues that there are five general principles that govern a state's national interest. A state seeks to survive and be secure from attack; be as autonomous as possible; maintain its domestic unity or cohesion; be as economically prosperous as possible; and have principled self-justification and prestige in the international system.<sup>3</sup> Each leader places different emphasis on the five principles and for Diefenbaker, the primary principle was the promotion of Canadian autonomy.

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<sup>1</sup> H. Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); Denis Smith, Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker. (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross, 1995); Peter C. Newman, Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years (Toronto: MacClelland and Stewart, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> See Steven Kendall Holloway, Canadian Foreign Policy: Defining the National Interest. (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006). Note that it is Holloway's theoretical framework of the National Interest Perspective which is being used and not his interpretation of Diefenbaker's record.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 14.

For Diefenbaker, autonomy meant freedom of choice. It did not mean that he wanted to pursue neutrality or a position of non-alignment; Canada was clearly aligned with the US and other member-nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Rather Diefenbaker simply believed that Canada needed to be free to choose which actions would best serve its interests. He rejected the proposition, embraced by the previous Liberal government under Louis St. Laurent that Canada's interests were best served by maintaining a close relationship with the US and mirroring, in many cases, US policy. Such an approach, he believed, would mean sacrificing Canadian freedom of action.

Keeping a respectful distance from the US lay at the heart of the Diefenbaker government's position towards Latin America. The goal of promoting Canadian trade and commerce in the region was carried forward from the St. Laurent years. But Diefenbaker went further than St. Laurent and William Lyon Mackenzie King (St. Laurent's predecessor), by taking steps to develop a relationship with individual countries in Latin America and with the region's multilateral organization, the Organization of American States (OAS), recognizing that the US Administration had reservations about the growth of communism in such a nearby region.

One of most striking things about Diefenbaker's approach towards developing the Canada-Latin America relationship was his tendency to insert himself personally in the processes by which his government formulated and implemented policy towards the region. The record shows that Diefenbaker supported, and involved himself in the implementation of, succeeding initiatives with select Latin American countries – for the larger purpose of developing Canada's interests in the region. He did this on a consistent

basis, facilitating policy implementation by establishing a personal relationship with specific Latin American leaders who had the power and influence to make important decisions. Generally speaking, he had little patience for utilizing the formal diplomatic structures and processes to develop Canada's relationships with other countries, or for drawn out negotiations with them.<sup>4</sup> He liked to use a more personal style of diplomacy to build strong relationships — in Latin America with leaders such as Adolfo López Mateos of Mexico, Sir Grantley Adams of the Federation of the West Indies, Dr. Arturo Frondizi of Argentina, as well as with officials from Brazil.

There were a number of international pressures that helped shape Diefenbaker's policies towards Latin America. Pressure from the US but, as importantly, from the various Latin American nations themselves, played an important role in determining policies towards the region. It was a shared view among the leaders of countries such as Mexico, Argentine, Brazil, the Federal of the West Indies, and Cuba that Canada's presence in the region could help, in certain instances, to moderate or dilute the strong influence of the US in the region. They actively courted Diefenbaker, who then saw an opportunity to expand Canadian economic and political interests in the region. The personal relationships that Diefenbaker was able to establish with some of these leaders would be instrumental in developing trade and other linkages.

Domestic influences also played a role in shaping Canadian policy. Diefenbaker's Latin American policies were deeply influenced by his Cabinet. He believed that the Cabinet should occupy a central place in the government's decision-making on all policy matters, including even the smallest issues such as credit insurance on exports. His desire to expand Canada's presence in Latin America was supported in Cabinet by ministers

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<sup>4</sup> Robinson, 35.



such as Howard Green, George Hees, Gordon Churchill, Pierre Seigny and Sidney Smith. With the exception of the Cuban Missile Crisis, there was a consensus in Cabinet about Canada's Latin American policies.

Diefenbaker was somewhat successful in his efforts to promote Canadian trade and other interests in Latin America. He was the first Canadian Prime Minister to visit the region, and he subsequently sent Canada's first foreign ministers there. In nearly every Latin America country in which Diefenbaker took an active interest, trade increased, and it was under his government that Canada finally established embassies in every Latin American nation.<sup>5</sup> With each country that either he visited or from which Canada received a visit by a Latin American head of state or head of government, trade levels as measured by export and imports increased.

Despite such successes, there is little historical record of them. There have been no books or articles written that examine Diefenbaker's Latin American policies in their entirety. In fact, with the singular exception of Cuba, there are virtually no works that deal with Diefenbaker and countries in Latin America. There are a few books that have a page or two that deal with some aspect of his government's position towards Latin America but there is none that focuses on Diefenbaker specifically.<sup>6</sup> The works that discuss Diefenbaker's Latin American policies do so as part of some larger topic, such as his foreign policy more generally or the man himself. The exception, of course, is Cuba and more specifically the Cuban Missile Crisis — a case, however, which reflects the definitive attribute of Diefenbaker's approach to the Latin American region — his

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<sup>5</sup> Statistics are provided in later chapters, however, in each of the nations mentioned trade in terms of exports to and imports from Canada increased between 1957 and 1963.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Peter McKenna discusses Diefenbaker's decision to not join the O.A.S. in less than 3 pages in his work, Canada and the O.A.S.: From Dilettante to Full Partner (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995).

tendency to approach the issues in a personal way based on a consistent application of his beliefs.

It was this tendency to personalize Canada's relations with Latin America, however, that created limits to what the Diefenbaker government would be able to achieve in the trade and other policy fields. As much as Diefenbaker was inclined to want to expand Canada's relationship with the Latin American region, viewing it as a signature way of building Canada's foreign policy outward beyond North America, the connections that he was able to establish with individual countries were hampered by their dependence on the short-term personal connections that he was able to establish with their leaders. When they lost power or were forced from office, the connections that he had been able to make were effectively lost.

The historical view of Diefenbaker has been shaped by his government's place in the Canadian political narrative. The Diefenbaker government was preceded by the so-called "Golden Age" of Canadian foreign policy (1945-57), which included the last years of the government of William Lyon Mackenzie King and that of Louis St. Laurent.<sup>7</sup> Pearson, who as St. Laurent's External Affairs Minister won the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in the Suez Crisis, is often linked to, and compared with Diefenbaker because the two men dominated Canadian politics between 1957 and 1967.<sup>8</sup> These comparisons often cast Diefenbaker in an unfavorable light.<sup>9</sup>

The theory of the Golden Age of Canadian foreign policy argued that during the period immediately following the Second World War, Europe and Japan were devastated.

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed account of the "Golden Age" theory see Andrew Cohen, While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2004) 5-20.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Jack Granatstein, Canada 1957-1967: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Canada, spared the destruction visited on much of the rest of the developed world, thus wielded economic, military and diplomatic influence in world affairs that was out of proportion to its size.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, between 1945 and 1957, the Canadian government benefited from having a number of highly capable individuals in the Department of External Affairs. The government, led first by King and then St. Laurent, allowed the Department to take the lead in establishing a reputation for Canada in the post-war international system. The combination of capable men and a favorable geo-political climate led to the Golden Age in Canadian foreign policy.

The theory unfortunately creates a problem for those who seriously want to understand Diefenbaker's foreign policy. The unspoken corollary of any theory that argues for a golden age is that the period which immediately follows is diminished by comparison. In other words, a golden age is not followed by an even better period but by a worse one. Thus, the acceptance of the idea of a golden age in Canadian foreign policy creates a starting point for the study of the Diefenbaker government's foreign policies, in which the assumption is that Canada suffered an immediate decline in its international influence.

The fact is that Canada's international influence did not go into a free-fall with the arrival of the Diefenbaker government. What is true is that as Europe and Japan recovered from the ravages of the Second World War, Canada's economic position declined in relation to these countries. But Diefenbaker's detractors point instead to erroneous economic and social policies pursued by a government headed by a prairie lawyer who suffered from serious character flaws. This was a Prime Minister who was

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<sup>10</sup> Cohen, 4-20.

not in the same league as his predecessors King and St. Laurent and his successor Pearson.

Pearson not only won the Noble Peace Prize in 1957 but he is also credited with redefining Canada's international role as a middle power that could best exercise influence by working with other nations, including the US, in multilateral organizations.<sup>11</sup> Despite Pearson's electoral failings (he is the only Liberal Prime Minister in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, aside from John Turner, who did not win at least one majority government) he continues to be viewed as one of Canada's greatest Prime Ministers, both by academics and by the general public. In 2004, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) held a contest to see who was "The Greatest Canadian," Pearson finished 6<sup>th</sup> and Diefenbaker 47<sup>th</sup>.<sup>12</sup> In 1997, *Maclean's* magazine asked 25 historians to rank Canada's Prime Ministers and once again Pearson was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> while Diefenbaker was 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>13</sup>

From a diplomatic perspective, the greatest difference between Pearson and Diefenbaker was their respective views on Canada's most important international relationship, the one with the US. Where Diefenbaker sought greater autonomy from the US, Pearson, like St. Laurent, believed in maintaining a close relationship with Washington. Pearson's US policies were supported by some of Canada's most pre-eminent diplomatic historians and foreign policy experts who viewed an amicable relationship with the United States as one of the most important keys to Canadian prosperity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John Holmes, "Most safely in the middle" *International Journal* 39, no. 2, 367-368.

<sup>12</sup> *The Greatest Canadian*. Producer, Mark Starowicz. CBC. November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Norman Hillmer, Jack Granatstein, "Historians Rank the Best and Worst Canadian Prime Ministers," *Maclean's*, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1997.

<sup>14</sup> Amongst them are historians John Holmes, *Canada: A Middle-Aged Power* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976) and Granatstein, *Canada 1957-1967*.

These historians believe that their interpretation is well supported by the fact the Canadian-US relationship, which was strained by the personal conflicts between Diefenbaker and US President John F. Kennedy, improved immediately with Pearson's victory in the 1963 election. Yet little mention is made of Pearson's decision to continue two of Diefenbaker's main Latin American policies: maintaining diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba and remaining outside the OAS. Instead the discussion of Canadian foreign policy in the post-war years has focused on the accomplishments of Pearson's middle-power internationalism. Thus the Diefenbaker era has occupied a dubious space in foreign policy literature, viewed by many as a transitional phase between the Golden Age and the Trudeau era. Historians have written extensively about the King and St. Laurent period as well as the Pearson and Trudeau years but few have written about Diefenbaker.

An example of the minimal attention given to Diefenbaker's foreign policy was a speech delivered by Frederic H. Soward, Professor Emeritus at the University of British Columbia to the Royal Society of Canada in 1966 — three years after Diefenbaker left the office of Prime Minister.<sup>15</sup> The title of Soward's presentation was "Some Aspects of Canadian Foreign Policy in the Last Quarter Century." No mention was made of Diefenbaker, and Soward discussed Howard Green in one paragraph, before ending with a discussion of Pearson and the current issues involving Canada and NATO.<sup>16</sup>

In fact there are a limited number of books dedicated solely to the study of Diefenbaker's foreign policy. Most of them proceed from the restrictive premise that Diefenbaker is to be judged from the standpoint of the state of Canada-US relations

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<sup>15</sup> F. H. Soward, "Some Aspects of Canadian Foreign Policy in the Last Quarter Century" Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada (Vol. IV, Series IV, June 1966), 139-153.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

during his tenure. There are two main views, the first of which is that Diefenbaker's attempt to create greater autonomy for Canadian foreign policy by distancing Canada from the US was a mistake — a mistake that was basically caused by flaws in Diefenbaker's character and leadership. The second view is that Diefenbaker's emphasis on Canadian autonomy in foreign policy was necessary and desirable, and his failures, like those of Pearson, were caused by forces and issues that were beyond his control.

The proponents of the first view argue that Canada can best exercise influence in the world by cultivating and maintaining a strong relationship with the United States. This close relationship allows the Canadian government to influence US policy, albeit in a rather minimal way, because the US government would be willing to entertain and at times accept Canadian recommendations out of respect for the support that Canada continues to offer to US initiatives. Thus, the Canadian government should offer full support to US initiatives regardless of how they benefit Canada because, in the long run, this policy will allow the Canadian government to influence US policies.

This support of the US must not be limited to verbal or political backing for their initiatives but must include tangible military support for US foreign adventures, even those that do not enjoy popular support in Canada. Thus, supporters of this view such as Peyton Lyon and J.L. Granatstein have argued that Canada's decision not to offer military support to the US during the Vietnam War and the Second Iraq War were substantial policy errors.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to recommending that the Canadian government support US initiatives in the hopes of receiving future considerations, Lyon and others have also argued that US

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<sup>17</sup> Peyton Lyon, "Quiet Diplomacy Revisited" in *An Independent Foreign Policy for Canada?*, (ed.) Stephen Clarkson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), 38-39. For Granatstein's views see the February 20, 2003, editorial in the *National Post*.

leadership of the West was necessary and as such, should be accepted by Canada.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, supporting the US is inevitable because it represents the preponderance of military power in the western world. As historian John Holmes has put it, “a realistic defense policy for Canada must assume that the final say rests in the hands of the power with decisive force [the United States].”<sup>19</sup> Thus, Diefenbaker’s insistence that the Canadian government make its own foreign policy decisions and pursue greater autonomy in international affairs is considered fatally flawed because it will inevitably, at some point, set Canada in opposition to the US — the classic case being the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Supporters of a US-centered foreign policy for Canada usually argue that Diefenbaker’s decision to choose a new path focusing on creating a more autonomous role for Canada in international affairs was not a strategic policy choice but rather the result of his numerous character flaws, the chief of which was a strong anti-Americanism. Many of the authors who share this view also have strong personal feelings about Diefenbaker, which are evident in both the titles of their works and their word choices therein. For example, the title of an early article that Lyon wrote for Maclean’s was “Diefenbaker’s first speech to the United Nations was a disaster: now he promises to make matters worse by delivering a second one”, and Patrick Nicholson titled his unauthorized biography of Diefenbaker Vision and Indecision.<sup>20</sup> Nicholson’s view was that, through his actions in the Cuban Missile Crisis, Diefenbaker embarrassed his friends

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<sup>18</sup> Lyon, “Quiet Diplomacy Revisited,” 38-39.

<sup>19</sup> Peyton Lyon, Canada in World Affairs 1961-63 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 67.

<sup>20</sup> Peyton Lyon, “Diefenbaker’s first UN speech was a disaster: now he promises to make matters worse by delivering a second one” Maclean’s July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1962, 3-4; Patrick Nicholson, Vision and Indecision (Don Mills: Longmans Canada, 1968).

and brought disgrace to his country.<sup>21</sup> Jamie Glazov, author of Canadian Policy toward Khrushchev's Soviet Union and a former student of Granatstein, also left little doubt about how he felt about Diefenbaker when he labeled the latter's Soviet policy, including his handling of Communist Cuba, a "pathetic failure."<sup>22</sup>

Pursuing a policy which was a "pathetic failure" is hardly a surprising charge, considering the long list of character flaws that Diefenbaker's detractors have attributed to him. Peter C. Newman, the best-selling author of Renegade in Power, a biography of Diefenbaker published in 1963, stated that Diefenbaker had "an almost morbid reluctance to make decisions" and that he could be "insatiably vain."<sup>23</sup> Newman described Diefenbaker's response to the Cuban Missile Crisis as "lackadaisical" and implied, incorrectly, that Canada offered less support to the US government than other western allies.<sup>24</sup> Newman was, and continues to be, one of the best selling and influential authors of Canadian history. During the late 1950s and early 1960s he was editor of Maclean's magazine and his editorials included often biting criticisms of the Diefenbaker government. What effect this had in creating and shaping the historical Diefenbaker could be the subject of another dissertation but it was and is certainly considerable.

Another author who took a similar view of Diefenbaker's character was Knowlton Nash, the author of Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing Across the Undefined Border.<sup>25</sup> Nash, a journalist, had close contact with both men and described their relationship as one of mutual antagonism. According to Nash, Diefenbaker felt that

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<sup>21</sup> Nicholson, 168.

<sup>22</sup> Jamie Glazov, Canadian Policy toward Khrushchev's Soviet Union (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 169.

<sup>23</sup> Newman, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 338.

<sup>25</sup> Knowlton Nash, Kennedy and Diefenbaker: Fear and Loathing Across the Undefined Border (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990).



Kennedy was a “spoiled boy” while Kennedy in turn, is reported to have characterized Diefenbaker as one of only two men he truly hated (the other being Sukarno, the dictator of Indonesia).<sup>26</sup> Diefenbaker, however, came out looking the worst of the two leaders. Nash attacked Diefenbaker’s character numerous times, calling him “weak and indecisive” and accusing him of having “a fantasy life that spilled into paranoia.”<sup>27</sup>

But there is another view of Diefenbaker’s foreign policy. This view argues that Diefenbaker’s attempt to chart a different foreign policy for Canada was necessary, justified and often effective. Diefenbaker pursued this new direction because of his particular view of Canada’s national interest — and not because of a strong anti-American sentiment. His fate was to come to power at a time of a daunting, shift in the geo-political climate of the post-war world. This, together with a strong bias against him in influential quarters within Canada, greatly hindered his policy initiatives.

A number of authors have discussed the effectiveness of Diefenbaker’s new direction in foreign affairs. George Grant, in Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism, maintained that while the Diefenbaker government was in power, “Canada played a more independent role internationally than ever before in its history.”<sup>28</sup> Richard A. Preston, author of Canada in World Affairs 1959-1961, viewed 1959-61 as years of great opportunity for Canada when Canadian policy was consistent and effective.<sup>29</sup> Preston contended that the death of US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, removed one of the impediments to the lessening of tensions during the Cold

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> George Grant, Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 28.

<sup>29</sup> Richard A. Preston, Canada in World Affairs 1959-1961 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1965), 4-7, 281-289.

War. Meanwhile the emergence of the Third World and the non-aligned movement and the recovery in Western Europe meant that the geo-political system was changing and so was Canada's role in it.

Supporters of Diefenbaker's new direction in foreign policy also argue that the move towards greater autonomy from the US was not motivated by anti-Americanism. Grant noted that Diefenbaker "never implied any criticism of America's world role" and was motivated instead by his sense of Canadian nationalism.<sup>30</sup> Trevor Lloyd, in his work Canada in World Affairs 1957 to 1959, attributed Diefenbaker's desire to increase Canada's role in the world as also stemming from his determination to compete for public recognition with Lester Pearson.<sup>31</sup>

While those who supported Diefenbaker's attempt to pursue a different kind of foreign policy were largely agreed that this was desirable and justifiable, they were divided over the cause of Diefenbaker's failure to effect a long-term change in Canada's international role. Lloyd believed that the Diefenbaker government was hindered by the fact that, "the two years between June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1957 and June 4<sup>th</sup> 1959 saw the beginning of a natural and probably unavoidable decline in Canada's influence on world affairs."<sup>32</sup> Grant argued that Diefenbaker was betrayed by the "economically powerful" in Canada, or by those who had no interest in being Canadian nationalists.<sup>33</sup> In his work The United States and Canada, Gerald M. Craig argued that a singular influence that limited

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<sup>30</sup> Grant, 29.

<sup>31</sup> Trevor Lloyd, Canada in World Affairs Vol. 10 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Lloyd, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Grant, 47.

Diefenbaker's foreign policy options was the enormous popularity in Canada of John Kennedy, to whom he was often unfavourably compared.<sup>34</sup>

One of the weaknesses of the criticism of Diefenbaker's foreign policy is its undue concentration on the state of Canada-US relations while he was Prime Minister. The judgment of his failings in international affairs seems most often to come back to his government's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. The verdict rendered by many is that Diefenbaker's decision to delay giving full support to the Kennedy Administration in confronting Khrushchev over Cuba was an error.

The authors holding this view are the same ones who were critical of Diefenbaker's attempt to pursue new directions in Canadian foreign policy. Peyton Lyon, for example, argued that, in the circumstances of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Diefenbaker had little reason to expect consultation from Kennedy, and that other Western leaders readily followed the US.<sup>35</sup> An intransigent Diefenbaker, Lyon maintained, did not recognize that he was a follower in the western alliance, not a leader.<sup>36</sup> "In the strategy of nuclear deterrence the delay of a few hours, perhaps even minutes can prove catastrophic," he argued, it was unacceptable that Canada should resist the US request for full, unconditional, support at a time of need.<sup>37</sup> More recently, John Kirk and Peter McKenna have echoed Lyon's conclusions in Canada and Cuba Relations: The Other

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<sup>34</sup> Craig, 254.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

<sup>36</sup> For the rebuttal see Kevin Gloin, "Canada-US Relations in the Diefenbaker Era: Another Look" in The Diefenbaker Legacy: Canadian Politics, Law and Society Since 1957 (ed.) D.C. Storey and R. Bruce Sheppard (Regina: Great Plains Research Center, 1998), 11.

<sup>37</sup> Lyon, Canada in World Affairs 1961-1963, 59.

Good Neighbour Policy, arguing that the western allies were in fact obliged to offer their support to the US, and that in this test of loyalty, Diefenbaker failed miserably.<sup>38</sup>

Supporters of this view argue that it was more than just logic that should have convinced Diefenbaker to support the US from the beginning; he should have recognized that the failure to act was an unacceptable violation of Canada's obligations to the US.<sup>39</sup> J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer take this sense of obligation further, going so far as to defend the extraordinary and questionable action taken by Defence Minister Douglas Harkness in placing Canada's armed forces on alert without the Prime Minister's authorization.<sup>40</sup>

Diefenbaker's decisions during the Cuban crisis are usually seen as reflecting a failure of leadership. Peter Haydon, a former Naval Commander, agrees with Granatstein, Hillmer, and others that Diefenbaker failed to show decisive leadership during the crisis when it counted the most.<sup>41</sup> In Newman's account, Kennedy was decisive and in control during the Cuban crisis, while Diefenbaker vacillated; his actions were "indecisive" and resulted in Canada being "isolated from the Western family of nations."<sup>42</sup>

Yet there is another view of Diefenbaker's actions during the Cuban crisis — one that argues that his government's delay in supporting Kennedy was understandable, in fact very much in keeping with Canada's tradition of working to decrease international tensions, and insisting that Canadian autonomy in foreign policy be respected. Historian

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<sup>38</sup> John Kirk, Peter McKenna Canada-Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbour Policy (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1997), 60.

<sup>39</sup> Norman Hillmer, J. L. Granatstein, Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s (Toronto: Copp Clark Longman, 1994), 259.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>41</sup> Peter Haydon, The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Newman., 339.

Jocelyn Maynard Ghent has argued that a “non-military response would have fit in with existing [Canadian] attitudes and interests”; moreover, the Diefenbaker government was understandably anxious about a situation over which it obviously had no control.<sup>43</sup> The way in which Kennedy handled the crisis meant that Canadians “found themselves on the brink, without consent and helpless to influence events in which they were inextricably involved.”<sup>44</sup> Arthur Andrew has stated similarly in The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney, that “Diefenbaker’s reluctance to act swiftly or automatically on a matter of such importance was awkward but ... it was also understandable.”<sup>45</sup> By the 1960s, Andrew argued, Canada was no longer in a position where it should be expected to fall into line without consultation and if there was to be another war then Canada should have a say in it.<sup>46</sup>

With the release of One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker,<sup>47</sup> Diefenbaker provided his own account of Canada’s relations with Latin America during his time, particularly as they were affected by Canada-US relations. He pointed out that he had initially contemplated joining the OAS but had changed his mind partly because of the manner in which the issue was raised by Kennedy.<sup>48</sup> In private, Kennedy had pressed Diefenbaker to take a greater interest in Latin America which he viewed as “more dangerous than any other place in the world.”<sup>49</sup> The implication was

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<sup>43</sup> Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, “Canada, the United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis” Pacific Historical Review 48 (2), 1979, 159-184., 181, 182.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Andrew The Rise and Fall of a Middle Power: Canadian Diplomacy from King to Mulroney (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1993), 51.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew, 51.

<sup>47</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto: MacMillan, 1975). Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956; Vol. 2 The Years of Achievement 1956-1962; Vol. 3 The Tumultuous Years 1963-67.

<sup>48</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada Vol. 2: The Years of Achievement 1957-62, 162-163.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 171.

that Canada had an obligation to undertake such an initiative — as Diefenbaker would later put it with characteristic scorn: “Canada owed so great a debt to the United States that nothing but continuing servitude could repay it.”<sup>50</sup> So offended was Diefenbaker by Kennedy’s suggestion that he reminded the President that Canada had lost more men than the United States in the First World War and an equivalent number in the Second.<sup>51</sup>

As the Cuban Missile Crisis began, Diefenbaker was actually more worried about Kennedy than Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. He feared Kennedy “was perfectly capable of taking the world to the brink of thermal-nuclear destruction to prove himself a man of our times.”<sup>52</sup> His account of the crisis shows that he deeply resented the lack of consultation by the United States, which he believed should have occurred.<sup>53</sup> For Diefenbaker, it was critical that Canada not take any action that would make the crisis worse: “Certainly we wanted the missiles removed from Cuba but not, if there was an alternative, at the price of global destruction.”<sup>54</sup>

The real threat to Canada was not so much a nuclear war, which Diefenbaker would do everything in his capacity to prevent, but rather the loss of freedom of action that would come from automatically following a directive from Washington when Canada had a different view. Diefenbaker’s critics would later charge that he made the wrong decision because he allowed his personal feelings towards Kennedy to influence his judgment. From Diefenbaker’s perspective, Kennedy was the one who had let his personal feelings affect his decision-making, bearing a grudge against the Canadian

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>52</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada Vol. 3: The Tumultuous Years 1962-67*, 80.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>54</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada Vol. 3: The Tumultuous Years 1962-67*, 88.

Prime Minister who he did not like. The lack of consultation had been a deliberate slight based on personal animosity.<sup>55</sup>

Diefenbaker's account is interesting and controversial, and is supported, for the most part, by the evidence. It does, however, gloss over the influence that Diefenbaker's own emotions had on his decision-making at the time. While he was acting very much within the Canadian tradition of attempting to do everything in his capacity to prevent the crisis from becoming worse, his delay in supporting the US position may be attributed, at least in part, to his own anger about the way the Canadian government was being treated.

Viewing Diefenbaker's new directions in foreign policy solely through the prism of Canadian-US relations or judging them by his actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis is restrictive and limiting. Only one book has been published that attempts to present a more encompassing view of Diefenbaker's approach to foreign affairs. In fact the only work devoted exclusively to the study of Diefenbaker's foreign policy is H. Basil Robinson's semi-biographical Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs.<sup>56</sup> Robinson served as special advisor to Diefenbaker on foreign affairs and he acted as a liaison between the Prime Minister and the Department of External Affairs. He was one of the few men Diefenbaker trusted and who enjoyed his confidence.

In Robinson's view, Diefenbaker suffered from the characteristics typical of a populist leader. These included a fear and mistrust of experts, too strong a belief in his personal intuition, and an inability to view international relations dispassionately.

Robinson felt that Diefenbaker faced many problems that were beyond his control and

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<sup>55</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada Vol. 3: The Tumultuous Years 1962-67*, 80.

<sup>56</sup> H. Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

that he struggled in dealing with the new dynamics that grew out of Canada's evolving relationship with the rest of the world.

According to Robinson, Kennedy was to blame for many of the difficulties that arose between the two countries — issues which interestingly had not been evident during the Eisenhower years. For example, following a trip to Mexico in early 1960 Diefenbaker contemplated membership in the OAS, thanks to the very warm reception he had received there.<sup>57</sup> But a short time later when Eisenhower's successor, John Kennedy, pressured him on the issue, he changed his mind, refusing in the end to even commit to sending a representative as an observer.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, Robinson argued, Kennedy was the problem during the Cuban Missile Crisis. "The Canadian government had been denied the opportunity to reach timely military and political conclusions."<sup>59</sup> The truth was that Canada had rendered considerable assistance to the United States during the crisis — assistance which apparently was insufficient for Kennedy.<sup>60</sup>

There are two recent publications that touch on Diefenbaker's foreign policy and that go beyond the critics' standard preoccupation with the Canadian-US relationship. These are John Hilliker and Donald Barry's Canada's Department of External Affairs Volume 2: Coming of Age, 1946-1968 and Costas Melakopides's Pragmatic Idealism: Canadian Foreign Policy 1945-1995.<sup>61</sup> Hilliker and Barry explore an often overlooked aspect of Diefenbaker's foreign policies — his relationship with the foreign affairs bureaucracy. They demonstrate that Diefenbaker's concerns over the loyalty of the

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<sup>57</sup> Robinson, 200.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 294.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>61</sup> John Hilliker and Donald Barry, Canada's Department of External Affairs Volume 2: Coming of Age, 1946-1968 (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Costas Melakopides, Pragmatic Idealism: Canadian Foreign Policy 1945-1995 (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998).



members of the Department of External Affairs were unfounded. Diefenbaker called External's bureaucrats "Pearsonalities" because he believed they continued to be loyal to Lester Pearson who was the External Affairs Minister under Louis St. Laurent and the Leader of the Opposition during Diefenbaker's years as Prime Minister. Hilliker and Barry show that the members of the Department in fact tried their best to work with their new boss and provide Diefenbaker with the advice and information that he needed.<sup>62</sup> The problem was that Diefenbaker had a different style of leadership from St. Laurent, remaining careful to ensure that Cabinet, and not senior bureaucrats, determined government policy.

Costas Melakopides has offered a distinctive interpretation of Canadian diplomatic history, viewing Diefenbaker's position on foreign affairs as consistent with the balanced and successful approach followed by Canadian Prime Ministers from the end of the Second World War to 1995. It was an idealistic foreign policy based on values representative of Canada's mainstream culture such as moderation, communication, mediation and cooperation,<sup>63</sup> while reflecting a pragmatism that displayed neither "romantic naïveté nor groundless utopianism."<sup>64</sup> Melakopides argues that the "Golden Age" of Canadian foreign policy did not end in 1957 but rather continued on through the Diefenbaker period and into the decades that followed.<sup>65</sup>

In Melakopides's judgment, "he [Diefenbaker] and his government performed with clear motives and, overall, achieved successful results."<sup>66</sup> While it is arguable that Diefenbaker allowed his personal feelings towards Kennedy to influence his position on

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<sup>62</sup> Hilliker and Barry, 133-143.

<sup>63</sup> Melakopides, 4.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

the Cuban Missile Crisis, a better explanation of his government's handling of the crisis is found in the paralysis that seized his Cabinet, together with the influence of anti-American sentiment in Canada.<sup>67</sup>

Melakopides' argument challenges the interpretation advanced by many writers that Diefenbaker's foreign policy was a departure from the successful Liberal approach that went before it. He questions whether the foreign policy pursued by previous Liberal governments under St. Laurent was any more successful or even very different from that pursued by Diefenbaker. What this study of Diefenbaker and Latin America shows is that in its broadest contours, his government's Latin American policy was not that different from the policy of the previous administration. It remained focused, to a large degree, on expanding trade and commerce between Canada and Latin America. Yet there was a different vision with Diefenbaker, entailing the active pursuit of specific Latin American initiatives that would further Canadian interests, including the interest of achieving greater autonomy for Canada from the US. In initiating and implementing policy, Diefenbaker would have a personal role, reflecting a key feature of his distinctive approach to leadership in foreign affairs.

This study attempts to go beyond old debates about the Golden Age of Canadian diplomacy and examines Diefenbaker's policies and actions in light of the influences and pressures that shaped them. It focuses on those Latin American and Caribbean states, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, the Federation of the British West and Cuba, upon which Diefenbaker took a personal interest. Chapter One begins by examining Diefenbaker's formative years, including the influences in his youth and adulthood that shaped his approach to political life. Diefenbaker's life on the Prairies, his career as a criminal

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

lawyer, and his family life all played important roles in shaping the personal attributes that would in turn influence his approach to political and policy questions while in government.

Chapter Two examines the geo-political context that shaped Canadian foreign policies towards Latin America following the Second World War as well as the policies of the Liberal governments of William Lyon Mackenzie King and Louis St. Laurent upon which Diefenbaker often built. Canada's changing relationship with Great Britain, the growing predominance of the US, as well as the progress of the Cold War all played important roles in influencing how various Canadian governments in the post-war world conceptualized their Latin American policies.

Chapter Three focuses on Diefenbaker's policies towards the Federation of the West Indies. The Federation was born in 1958 and looked to Canada as a model to follow in terms of bridging geographic and cultural differences in a nation. Its leader, Sir Grantly Adams, formed a strong personal bond with Diefenbaker. Diefenbaker approved a \$10 million aid package to the new nation, evidently feeling a sentimental attachment to the islands and leading him to try and assist the newly born federation whenever possible.

Chapter Four shifts the focus to Mexico, a nation that shared with Canada the unique experience of bordering the United States. The Mexican government actively sought to increase the country's ties to Canada and Diefenbaker made the first Prime Ministerial visit to a Latin American nation when he visited Mexico in 1960. He left with the strong belief that Canada was missing opportunities for the expansion of trade and political influence in Latin America. His visit also led him to decide to actively explore joining the Organization of American States.

Chapter Five explores how Diefenbaker came very close to bringing Canada into the OAS. In this organization he saw a potential vehicle for the pursuit of Canadian interests in Latin America. He also felt that if Canada joined the organization, it could act as a bridge between Europe and Latin America. There was pressure from numerous Latin American nations, most prominently Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, for Canada to join, but in the end Diefenbaker's deteriorating relationship with US President John F. Kennedy led him to decide that the risks of membership ultimately outweighed the benefits.

Chapter Six looks at Diefenbaker's policies towards the two largest nations of South America: Brazil and Argentina. In both nations there was an active attempt to bring about closer relations with Canada. Diefenbaker was receptive to strengthening the Canadian relationship with both countries and developed a strong personal relationship with the presidents of both. However, when the leadership in Argentina and Brazil changed, the primary connection with Diefenbaker was lost and the positive momentum that pushed the nations closer disappeared.

The last two chapters focus on Cuba. Chapter Seven examines Diefenbaker's reaction to and policies towards the Cuban Revolution. As US-Cuban tensions increased in response to the Revolution, the United States decided to implement an economic embargo and asked Canada to join it. Despite his excellent relationship with then President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Diefenbaker refused. Canada had little reason to join the boycott as the Cuban government did not nationalize or appropriate Canadian companies. Furthermore, Diefenbaker believed that since Canada maintained economic

relations with other communist states there was little justification in joining the embargo based on Cuba's adoption of a communist system of government.

Chapter Eight takes a closer look at one of Diefenbaker's most controversial foreign policy decisions — his two-day hesitation in authorizing the Canadian military to raise the alert status for Canada's NORAD forces during the Cuban Missile Crisis. The decision reflected both his insistence that Canada achieve greater autonomy in foreign affairs vis-à-vis the US and his inclination to personally intervene in the decision-making process to guide Canadian policy. Canada, he believed, needed to make its own choice on when or whether to offer full support to the US. The timing of his decision-making was influenced by his personal relationship with Kennedy and his beliefs concerning the origins of the crisis and the nature of the threat.

Diefenbaker's policies towards Latin America reflected his view that Canada's national interest was best served by pursuing a foreign policy that achieved greater autonomy from the US than under previous Canadian governments. The St. Laurent government had operated from the presupposition that Canada's national interest was best served by maintaining a close relationship with the United States and broadly supporting American foreign policy. Diefenbaker's Latin American policy was driven and implemented by strong personal leadership, and was based on his particular perception of Canada's national interest. This did not mean that his policies marked a complete departure from those of the previous Liberal government; rather, in many instances, they built upon them.

## CHAPTER 1 THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Diefenbaker attempted to implement his Latin American policy largely through the use of personal intervention and involvement on specific policy issues. His tendency to intervene personally in matters was principally the result of the formative circumstances of his upbringing and his political career prior to his election as Prime Minister in 1957. Diefenbaker was used to working and making decisions alone; his strength, he believed, was in taking decisive action not engaging in extensive consultation or delegation. He followed this belief throughout both his legal and early political careers and his successes therein only served to reinforce his tendencies in this regard. It was this emphasis on self-reliance that contributed to the fact that Canada's Latin America policy under Diefenbaker often reflected his own ideas, convictions and vision.<sup>68</sup>

Diefenbaker's decision-making was shaped by a number of his personal characteristics, including his self-reliance, and it was underscored by a strong sense of personal freedom. Diefenbaker valued the freedom to follow one's own convictions and to act autonomously. He projected this value into the international arena and felt that Canada needed to act in a similar manner in foreign affairs. Canada needed to be able to follow a more autonomous path that reflected Canadian values and interests. Thus, he rejected continentalism and lessened the emphasis on keeping close to the US on foreign policy issues. This desire to chart a new course was buttressed by a strong single-mindedness, a tendency to ultimately make decisions alone and a supreme confidence in his own decisions. Diefenbaker liked to rely on numerous sources of information and

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<sup>68</sup> Howard H. Lentner, "Foreign Policy Decision Making: The Case of Canada and Nuclear Weapons" *World Politics*, 29, no. 1, (1976): 56.

refused to accept that any source should predominate, yet, paradoxically, this did not lead him to develop his skills as a conciliator as the flow of information was almost always in one direction, from the source to Diefenbaker.

Diefenbaker's Latin American policy was directly influenced by a number of these personal qualities and beliefs. These were developed and honed by a life-time spent on the wind-swept Prairies, struggling for political success and arguing in the defense of those accused of criminal action before crowded court rooms. They were also deeply influenced by his family, particularly the trinity of women who dominated his personal life: his mother Mary, his first wife Edna and his second wife Olive.

Although on the surface, the Canadian Prairies and Latin America would appear to have had little in common, Diefenbaker perceived a warmth and sense of community in Latin America that reminded him of his upbringing on the Prairies. For a young John Diefenbaker the Prairies were filled with people to whom class and ethnicity were of minor importance. He found a warmth and sense of community there that were in stark contrast to his experiences in Toronto, where he had frequently visited with his father while the family lived in Ontario.<sup>69</sup> In his memoirs Diefenbaker recalled journeying with his father out West to claim land for homesteading. The two ran out of food and stopped by a small hospice that was home to a Swedish bachelor. The latter provided the two with supper and Diefenbaker remembered, though the food was awful, it was the best the man had and he gave of it willingly and without complaint. "It was" he wrote "a typical example of Prairie hospitality."<sup>70</sup> It was in this experience and others similar to it - like the many times that his family entertained Mennonites, Doukobors, and Ukrainians in

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<sup>69</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 15.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 33-34.

their small schoolhouse - that Diefenbaker developed a deep fondness for overt displays of personal affection.<sup>71</sup>

Diefenbaker would consistently encounter similar displays while he attempted to implement his Latin American policy. He came across these demonstrations when he traveled to Mexico and when he received leaders from Argentina and the West Indies. As well, the reports of various Canadian dignitaries who were sent to represent the Canadian government to Brazil, Mexico and Argentina were filled with comparable acts of affection towards the Canadians and often Diefenbaker himself. Whether it was Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek informing Diefenbaker that they were both the sons of immigrants or Argentine President Dr. Arturo Frondizi telling Diefenbaker that his visit to Canada left him with the best possible impression, Diefenbaker was consistently and deeply moved by these types of comments and gestures.<sup>72</sup>

It was during the many times that his family entertained guests that Diefenbaker developed his own personal touch, his ability to influence people through the force of his personality. It was an attribute that he used to devastating effect during his election campaigns. In all three of his major electoral breakthroughs, his victory in Prince Albert in 1953, his election as Progressive Conservative Party leader in 1956 and his dethronement of the Liberals in 1957, Diefenbaker ran on populist platforms that focused on himself rather than on the political party with which he was affiliated. Yet this personal approach proved to be a double-edged sword, at once a great strength and a

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>72</sup> Memorandum of a Conversation with President Kubitschek at Luncheon at Laranjeiras Palace, Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, File 539, 012452; Arturo Frondizi, "Telegram from Gander, Newfoundland," December 1, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, Vol. 561, File A691.1, 427320.



great weakness as it also meant that Diefenbaker was acutely susceptible to personal charms/overtures.

Diefenbaker's conceptualization of the Canadian identity was also shaped by the Prairies. This identity was formed in response to both the acceptance he felt on the Prairies and to the occasional attacks that called into question his "Canadianness". These attacks were often directed at his last name, for example when political opponents in the 1925 federal election called him a "Hun" to emphasize his Germanic sounding name.<sup>73</sup> Diefenbaker responded by stating that "if there is no hope for me to be a Canadian then who is there hope for?"<sup>74</sup> He made it a common theme throughout his political career to reshape the prevailing concept of what constitutes a "Canadian" with his own, non-ethnic, non-hyphenated view which focused on contemporary citizenship. He felt that the contemporary Canadian identity was based on, and privileged, those who could trace their lineage back to England or France. This left out the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who came from other nations. Thus he sought to replace the French-Canadian or English Canadian identities with a Canadian one that included all Canadians and was based not on ethnic origins but on Canadian citizenship. This was the origin of Diefenbaker's idea of "One Canada" and this new definition included, of course, Diefenbaker himself. Diefenbaker rejected the traditional ethnic poles of political power of English and French Canadians — which helps to explain his limited interest in Quebec while in national politics. There was no room for special treatment of any kinds of Canadians.

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<sup>73</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 132.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 132.

An interesting aspect of Diefenbaker's idea of "One Canada" was its similarity to the notion of the American "melting pot" and the manner in which Diefenbaker's upbringing on the Prairies helped shape his view of the influence of the American other. The Prairies, in many aspects, were more deeply influenced by American society than other regions in Canada. Both the proximity to the US and the familiarity of the American homesteader across the border contributed to this. Many ideas that appealed to Diefenbaker had their origins in the US. For example, R. B. Bennett's New Deal, of which Diefenbaker was a strong supporter, was modeled after Franklin Roosevelt's.<sup>75</sup> As well, American expressions of patriotism and independence struck a chord with him as they echoed his own strong feelings for Canada.

Diefenbaker, and many other Canadians, admired and feared the power of the US. Yet he was not anti-American in the sense that he rejected everything American; rather, he was concerned about the loss of Canadian autonomy that he saw as the inevitable result of the close association between the two countries. It was, ironically, the very autonomy which US administrations had always insisted on preserving in international affairs that Diefenbaker cherished for Canada. Thus the US played an important role in shaping the attitudes and ideas of a young Diefenbaker.

In addition to his years on the Prairies, many aspects of Diefenbaker's Latin American policy were also influenced by his early political career and his rather unconventional rise to the office of Prime Minister. His decision to join the Conservative Party of Canada rather than the Liberal Party allowed him the freedom to pursue a more personal political agenda. Furthermore, the opposition that he often encountered from the core of the Conservative Party during his rise through its ranks encouraged him to pursue

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<sup>75</sup> Smith, 78-79.

a personal approach to policy formation and implementation. This had the effect of making him less reliant, for good or for ill, on the resources available to him once he became Prime Minister.

Diefenbaker's embrace of new directions in Canadian foreign policy was based on a political career where he often rejected political convention. The reason he was able to do this and still succeed in politics can be traced back to the decision to join the Conservative Party in 1925. It was a decision that can partly be attributed to geography, as the Prairies bequeathed to him the political circumstance that he exploited to succeed politically on his own terms, namely a weak Conservative Party. Diefenbaker was hardly a life-long Tory devotee. His father had been a strong Liberal supporter and Diefenbaker was deeply impressed by Sir Wilfrid Laurier when they had met by chance in 1910. Laurier bought a newspaper from the fifteen year old Diefenbaker and the latter recalled that he "had the awed feeling that he was in the presence of greatness."<sup>76</sup>

Diefenbaker also reportedly supported Liberal candidate T. C. Davis in the Saskatchewan Provincial election of 1925.<sup>77</sup> Three weeks after Davis was victorious Diefenbaker was nominated as the federal Conservative candidate for the riding of Prince Albert. He accepted and would thereafter remain a member of the Conservative Party until his death in 1979. Why the sudden switch? The answer to that question reveals much about the strength of Diefenbaker's political ambitions and ideals as well as the nature of the Liberal and Conservative Parties at the turn of the century.

One major difference between the Liberal and Conservative Parties during the early decades of the twentieth century was in their handling of foreign affairs. The

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<sup>76</sup>Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 70-71.

<sup>77</sup> Smith, 43.

Liberals drifted towards continentalism after their first attempts at reciprocity during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Conservatives sought to maintain and strengthen the British connection. For Diefenbaker, continentalism was an attack on the essential British connection that formed the foundation of the Canadian identity. He believed that, “Our institutional heritage and Commonwealth citizenship gave Canada a uniqueness in North America that was vital to our preservation as a nation.”<sup>78</sup> This rejection of continentalism was an essential aspect of Diefenbaker’s Latin American policy. He sought closer ties with Latin America in part to lessen Canada’s dependence on the US and as a way of distinguishing Canada’s policy towards the region from US policy.

Domestically, however, Diefenbaker was closer to the post-Great Depression Liberal Party which had embraced welfare liberalism.<sup>79</sup> He believed that it was important for the government to provide social services and to guarantee a minimum standard of living for its citizens. These beliefs were reflected in his legislative agenda as Prime Minister, for example his promotion of unemployment insurance and old age pensions. In many ways Diefenbaker defied easy categorization as a Liberal or as a Conservative.<sup>80</sup> George Grant argued that Diefenbaker (and other politicians who shared his ideological views) belonged to a uniquely Canadian ideology, Red Toryism. The term originated from political scientist Gad Horowitz who coined it in 1966 following Diefenbaker’s defeat.<sup>81</sup> Red Tories emphasized traditional conservative values, such as deep respect for

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<sup>78</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 131.

<sup>79</sup> Welfare liberalism refers here to ideas that were expounded by those liberals who rejected the classical liberal view that government needed to minimally involved in society and instead believed that government could be a force for maximizing the freedom of opportunity of its citizens through the construction of a social safety net.

<sup>80</sup> Newman, 179.

<sup>81</sup> Gad Horowitz, “Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation” The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 32, no. 2 (May, 1966); 158.

government, together with more welfare liberal ideas of government intervention in society to address social ills. Red Tories tended to fit with either the Liberal or Conservative Parties, although until 2003 they were almost all members of the Progressive Conservatives. (Their ability to fit into either party was demonstrated by the movement of a number of Red Tories, such as John Herron and Scott Brison, from the Conservative Party to the Liberal Party following the former's creation at the merger of the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance in 2003.)

Ideological considerations thus only partly explained Diefenbaker's choice of political party; another factor in his decision was practicality. At the turn of the nineteenth century the Conservative Party in Saskatchewan was a pale shadow of its powerful counterpart in Ontario. Between 1905 and 1944, the Liberals dominated Saskatchewan politics, winning every provincial election (except 1929) and they had a powerful, effective organization that steamrolled the opposition. The Liberals also dominated Saskatchewan at the federal level. Between 1908 and 1940, the Conservative Party was shut out of the province in five elections and in three elections managed to win only a single seat each time. Diefenbaker, whose single-minded pursuit of political success had begun at a young age, saw little room for rapid advancement as part of the Liberals; there were simply too many people waiting ahead of him in the queue. The Conservatives offered an opportunity for a quick progression in both position and prestige. Indeed, with the Conservatives' fortunes so low, victory was not a necessity; a good showing was considered a success.<sup>82</sup> Thus there was a pragmatic quality to Diefenbaker's decision to join the Conservative Party.

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<sup>82</sup> Smith, 44.

If Diefenbaker had joined the Liberals he would have been forced to conform to the Party's policies or else be quickly shunted aside. As a Conservative candidate in Saskatchewan there were far less constraints on the expression of his personal views. This was fortunate, since Diefenbaker's "Red Tory" ideals were not shared by a majority of Conservative Party members during the early part of the twentieth century. Freed from the constraints of conforming to a centralized, traditional party platform, Diefenbaker often ran personal campaigns that bore little resemblance to the national Conservative Party platform. For example, during the 1925 federal campaign when Conservative leader Arthur Meighen expressed his opposition to the construction of the Hudson's Bay Railway, Diefenbaker publicly announced that if elected he would resign if construction on the railway had not begun within two years.<sup>83</sup>

Diefenbaker's problems with his party's centre continued throughout his political career. The Conservative Party, he once stated, was a party that needed "to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 20<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>84</sup> At one time he complained that the official Conservative campaign forced him to try to "explain matters that were unexplainable" to his constituents during a campaign.<sup>85</sup> He lost that particular election, as he lost the first five elections that he contested. When he finally emerged victorious in the 1940 federal election, he won by running on a populist platform that focused on himself rather than the Conservative Party. Thus he felt that he owed little to the Party's leadership and he begrudged them the many handicaps that he perceived were placed on

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<sup>83</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 133.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

his earlier campaigns by them. It was an antagonism that continued throughout his political career.

Diefenbaker's early conflicted relationship with the Conservative Party and his lack of trust in its policy choices led him to rely on his own intuition and ideas. As far as he was concerned, the Party's centre had proven unfit stewards for the Conservative tradition. This refusal or inability to deal with a large bureaucracy in an effective manner also hurt his relationship with it and was typical of Diefenbaker.

This translated directly to difficulties in his relationship with the Department of External Affairs. Prior to his 1957 election victory, the Department of External Affairs had grown quite used to having a strong voice in the shaping of foreign policy and it enjoyed enormous influence in this role under Louis St. Laurent. Diefenbaker, however, wanted the Department to provide him with the information that he sought to shape policy not provide policy for him to shape. Its inability to conform to his wishes contributed to his intense distrust of its senior officials as well as his belief that they were secretly loyal to former Secretary of State for External Affairs and new Liberal Party leader, Lester Pearson.<sup>86</sup>

Historians John Hilliker and Basil Robinson have argued that for the most part the Department's members did their jobs without allowing political bias to enter into their work.<sup>87</sup> Both authors pointed out the difficulties of working with Diefenbaker, a leader who was looking to articulate firmly held opinions to the public not discuss the Department's (often) differing views on the matter.

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<sup>86</sup> John Hilliker, "The Politicians and the Personalities: The Diefenbaker Government and the Conduct of Canada's External Relations" *Canadian Historical Association Papers*, 1984, 151-167.

<sup>87</sup> Hilliker, 151 and H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 33-34.

Hilliker and Robinson's arguments imply that the bureaucracy was not in fact biased against Diefenbaker. But there is hardly unanimous agreement on this point. There are numerous people who have argued that the civil service believed, as former civil servant and latter Liberal MP Jack Pickersgill did, that the non-Liberal governments were nothing more than short term aberrations, small breaks before the natural governing party was returned to power.<sup>88</sup>

Regardless of the accuracy of Diefenbaker's beliefs on the attitude of the civil service there certainly was a problem of communication between himself and the Department of External Affairs. Believing that he could not rely exclusively on its advice he often turned to other, non-Departmental sources of information, such as academics, friends, members of the press and other world leaders (British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan being a prominent example).<sup>89</sup> He also tended to put great value on the information garnered and agreements that he made, for example, while meeting personally with Latin American leaders.

If Diefenbaker's early political career sowed the seeds that spawned a particular approach to decision-making which was reflected in his policies toward Latin America, his latter successes - assuming leadership of the Party and then leading the Conservatives to their first federal electoral triumph in 27 years - represented the harvest. He achieved these successes by pursuing a political agenda focused on himself and his personal policy positions.

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<sup>88</sup> See William Heward Grafftey, Democracy Challenged: How to End One-Party Rule in Canada (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 2002), 20; Jack Pickersgill, The Road Back: By a Liberal in Opposition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

<sup>89</sup> Robinson, 38-40.



At the 1948 Conservative Party Leadership Convention he was overlooked by the Party in favour of former Ontario leader George Drew and he felt the sting of that rejection keenly.<sup>90</sup> He viewed it as engineered by the Party's centre and recalled that during his visit to congratulate Drew at the latter's hotel room he was made to feel by those Party leaders present, "as if an animal not customarily admitted to homes had suddenly entered into the place."<sup>91</sup> In many respects, he turned his back on the Party and relied on a purely populist platform for his two subsequent crucial election victories prior to 1957, the contest for the riding of Prince Albert in 1953 and the struggle for the Progressive Conservative Leadership in 1956. His success in both contests reinforced his belief in the importance of charting his own course.

Prior to the federal election of 1953, the Liberal government abolished Diefenbaker's riding of Lake Centre during the redistribution of seats following the 1951 census. This forced him to find another riding in which to run for the 1953 election. He felt that this was a deliberate attempt by the Liberals to get rid of him.<sup>92</sup> He had been contemplating retirement but with the perceived attack on him by the Liberal Party he decided to "show the Liberal government that they could not do this to me."<sup>93</sup> After much thought, he ran in the riding of Prince Albert. Diefenbaker clubs quickly sprang up throughout the riding and his campaign posters made no mention of the new Conservative leader, George Drew or Drew's policies.<sup>94</sup> Instead, Diefenbaker rode his own image to victory. It was a telling moment. On five previous occasions he had run

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<sup>90</sup> Newman, 29.

<sup>91</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 247.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Dick Spencer, Trumpets and Drums: John Diefenbaker on the Campaign Trail (Toronto: Greystone Books, 1994), 10.

for office in Prince Albert, as a mayoral, provincial and federal candidate but lost on each occasion.

Diefenbaker was acutely aware that the riding of Prince Albert had twice elected the Prime Minister of Canada, with both Wilfrid Laurier and William Lyon Mackenzie King having previously held the seat. In 1925, he contested the riding of Prince Albert against King and was defeated. In 1953, his popularity and influence had so grown that he took the supposedly safe Liberal seat for his own.

With that victory, the Prime Minister's office was now in sight. For Diefenbaker it was his personal approach which had provided the key to unlocking the door to his own success. He would use that same key to open the door to the leadership of the party that had long been denied him. Following his defeat at the 1948 Leadership Convention his sense of inevitable victory was rekindled when George Drew proved unable to break the Liberal stranglehold on power, despite two elections and the retirement of Mackenzie King. It was with more than a little satisfaction that he watched as the Liberals, under King's successor, Louis St. Laurent, actually made up ground in Drew's home province of Ontario. Finally, in 1956, worn out by his years in politics, Drew was forced to retire due to ill health, although he likely would not have been able to avoid questions of his leadership even if he had retained his strength.

The 1956 Progressive-Conservative Leadership Convention served to illustrate both Diefenbaker's tendency to focus on the personal and his alienation from the traditional poles of English and French Canada. He correctly believed that the party establishment would be unable to prevent his victory.<sup>95</sup> He once again ran on a populist platform and this time he finally captured the leadership. His posters were everywhere

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<sup>95</sup> Spencer, 20.

and though many of the establishment did not support him, the rank and file members certainly did.<sup>96</sup> He was the people's champion and he believed that the righteousness of his cause was clearly demonstrated by his victory against the elite whom he viewed as having conspired against him.

Diefenbaker's victory, however, was underscored by controversy involving his distaste for the traditional division of Canada into English and French sections. It was a tradition that one of the two formal nominations of the leadership candidate should be from the Quebec delegation.<sup>97</sup> Diefenbaker, however, chose George Pearkes from British Columbia and Hugh John Flemming from New Brunswick to represent Western and Eastern Canada, rather than a francophone from Quebec. The choice caused a minor stir at the convention. Pierre Sevigny, who was a Diefenbaker supporter and later became Associate Minister of National Defence in the Diefenbaker cabinet, viewed it as a major mistake.<sup>98</sup> Léon Balcer, the nominal leader of the Quebec delegation, actively campaigned against Diefenbaker and several members of the delegation left the convention after Diefenbaker was announced as the new leader.<sup>99</sup>

Diefenbaker's choice to alienate an important and influential wing of the party at the 1956 leadership convention was short-sighted and, unfortunately for Diefenbaker, all too common. He lacked that crucial ability to work with those who did not share his views and those who felt that they were entitled to something that is indispensable to political life and diplomacy. He was not inclined to want to build consensus, nor was he

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<sup>96</sup> George C. Perlin, The Tory Syndrome: Leadership Politics in the Progressive Conservative Party (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1980), 54.

<sup>97</sup> Peter Stursberg, Diefenbaker: Leadership Gained, 1956-62 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 18.

<sup>98</sup> Sturberg, 19.

<sup>99</sup> Perlin, 54.

a man who could see the various shades of grey in any given situation; rather, he all too often saw decisions as clear cut: black or white. The people involved in those situations were often faced with a stark choice, either be with Diefenbaker or against him. He did not fear burning bridges and in the end he would burn too many.

This inability to work with those who did not share his views and/or those who had a sense of entitlement ultimately had a strong, negative effect on his Latin American policies. When Argentine President Frondizi was overthrown by military coup Diefenbaker made little attempt to continue to strengthen Canadian-Argentine relations with the new government and all the work he previously committed to that object was lost. More damaging was the fact that these character traits all but doomed Diefenbaker's relationship with John Kennedy, who not only had a different geo-political world view than Diefenbaker but also carried with him a strong sense of entitlement.

Diefenbaker's personal attention to his Latin American policy initiatives can also be understood as partially a result of his career path prior to his assumption of Canada's highest political office. His political and legal careers did not train Diefenbaker in the ability to effectively manage a bureaucracy, to implement policies with long-range goals or to delegate responsibility. Thus, when he formulated his Latin American policy, he relied on himself rather than the bureaucracy of the Department of External Affairs.

During most of his early political career he sat in the opposition benches (from the time of his first electoral victory in 1940 until 1957). He was never a member of his party's centre and never had the opportunity to formulate policy. When he finally assumed a leadership position in 1956, he had less than a year to grow accustomed to a situation of authority with which he had little experience. Before his election as

Conservative Party leader his successes appeared to be in attacking the legislation and records of his opponents. The skills required to succeed in this venue had been honed during his long legal career.

Diefenbaker's legal career left a deep impression on him. Though the majority of his law work was in the area of civil law, it was as a criminal lawyer that he excelled and made a name for himself.<sup>100</sup> His strength did not lie in diligent research but in cross examination. There were a number of cases where he did not submit any evidence to the court, relying exclusively on his ability to poke holes in the prosecution's case through a thorough cross-examination.<sup>101</sup> An effective cross examination relies on the personality and skills of the lawyer delivering it. The lawyer responds to the witness, rather than presenting a carefully scripted case to the judge or jury. Thus, Diefenbaker developed those skills which benefited him in the personal aspect of diplomacy, such as his many meetings with Latin American leaders, but neglected those that built on the bridges that these meetings had established.

This propensity for favouring the personal focused cross-examination rather than constructing his own case was most evident in Diefenbaker's defence of John Harms, an American who had travelled to the Saskatchewan North to hunt and trap. While there, Harms took on a partner, a young man named John Anthony, who originally hailed from Alberta. On November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1935, the two men argued and in a drunken stupor Harms shot and killed Anthony.<sup>102</sup> Upon his arrest he confessed to the crime and hired Diefenbaker to conduct his defence. During both the trial and the subsequent retrial

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<sup>100</sup> Ken Whiteway, "The Legal Career of John G. Diefenbaker" *Saskatchewan History* 53, no. 1, (2001): 26.

<sup>101</sup> For a detailed description of the cases, see Garrett Wilson and Kevin Wilson, *Diefenbaker for the Defence* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1988).

<sup>102</sup> Wilson, 191-206.

Diefenbaker did not call any witnesses or introduce any evidence, rather he cross-examined the prosecution's witnesses and successfully (in the re-trial) argued that the most that Harms was guilty of was manslaughter.<sup>103</sup> Many of Diefenbaker's other cases followed a similar pattern.<sup>104</sup>

The case of Isobel Emele is also instructive in this regard. Emele was charged with murdering her husband and the evidence gave the prosecution what appeared, at least on the surface, to be an airtight case.<sup>105</sup> Her husband, however, had been a member of the pro-Nazi Bund, and in 1940, Canada was at war with Germany and the Nazis. Diefenbaker attacked the dead man's character, painting him as "an autocratic, miserly bully who gloried in the conquests of Adolf Hitler."<sup>106</sup> Perhaps most tellingly, at the end of the case Diefenbaker explained to the jury his role as defence counsel. "It is not the duty of the defence to prove anything in this case – nothing. The onus is on the Crown to prove murder."<sup>107</sup>

Diefenbaker took on many non-criminal cases as a lawyer but never to any great success and he deliberately cultivated the image of himself as criminal lawyer, finding that it meshed well with the image of a fiery orator that emerged from his early forays into politics.<sup>108</sup> It was an identity that proved both self-fulfilling and self-limiting. He was never a great conciliator or as a policy expert and, perhaps most importantly, did not see this as a significant weakness.

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<sup>103</sup> Wilson, 206.

<sup>104</sup> In Diefenbaker for the Defence see the cases of Pasowesty; Wysochan; Steve Bohun; and Napoleon Fouquette.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 236.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>108</sup> Wilson, 55.

In addition to his political career, Diefenbaker's family also played an important role in shaping his person. His mother Mary instilled in him a strong sense of self-belief and self-reliance. His first wife Edna provided invaluable aid and support for his early forays into politics and his second wife, Olive, served to reinforce his own personal values and ideas.

Diefenbaker acknowledged his debt to his mother early in his memoirs, "mother gave me drive" he says in what was surely an understatement.<sup>109</sup> He remained very close to her until her death. His first wife Edna once stated that, "John has three loves: his mother, politics and me – in that order."<sup>110</sup> Mary would constantly urge him on, never wavering in her belief that he would achieve great things. She focused on her eldest son because her husband had so obviously lacked the drive to achieve what she considered success.

Mary Diefenbaker also had a firm self-belief in the correctness of her decisions and this, too, she passed on to her son. She believed, as did Diefenbaker, that time would eventually prove that her choices were the correct ones. Her husband appeared to accept that this was the case and once told Diefenbaker that "Mary is always right. Sometimes I don't think so at the time but it always turns out to be the proper course to take."<sup>111</sup>

When the family was moving from Ontario to Saskatchewan and Diefenbaker's father began to have serious doubts as to the wisdom of the decision, Mary forced them to continue on. Diefenbaker recalled:

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<sup>109</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 8.

<sup>110</sup> Simma Holt, The Other Mrs. Diefenbaker: A Biography of Edna May Brower (Markham: Paperjacks Ltd., 1983), 144.

<sup>111</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 20.

At Fort William he [William Diefenbaker] proposed we turn back. Mother said “We started out and we’re going on.” Father was quite set and replied that no matter what, he was returning. Mother would have none of this. She told him, “If you do, the rest of us will carry on and you’ll come out sooner or later.”<sup>112</sup>

They carried on and the incident left little doubt as to who ran the family.

Diefenbaker’s father William had a very different mindset than his wife. William passed on his love of Parliament and the British connection to his son. This love of Parliament was a fixture of Diefenbaker’s political career. It was evident, for example, in his sharp criticisms of the Mackenzie King government’s handling of Canada’s participation in the Second World War. He felt that the King government was stripping away power and authority from Parliament.<sup>113</sup> In the House of Commons he argued that “This Parliament represents the people of Canada; it is a repository and trustee of their hopes and survival.”<sup>114</sup> It was this respect for Parliament and its institutions, including the power of the Cabinet, that played an important role in Diefenbaker’s Latin American policy. He frequently used Cabinet to advance individual policies towards specific American nations such as Mexico and the Federation of the West Indies. His strong desire to achieve cabinet unanimity also proved to be an important factor in how he handled the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The driven Mary Diefenbaker and the laid back William Diefenbaker were able to reconcile their different outlooks in the bonds of marriage. Their son, however, often found that the ideas that he inherited from his parents were frequently at odds with each other. His drive to achieve victory and his supreme confidence in his own decisions

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<sup>112</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 1 The Crusading Years 1895-1956, 19.

<sup>113</sup> Smith, 119.

<sup>114</sup> House of Commons Debates, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1942, 3888.



were, in some respects, difficult to reconcile with his reverence for Canada's parliamentary system of government. Rather than centralize power in the Prime Minister's Office like later Prime Ministers Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Paul Martin or Stephen Harper, he continued to put major decisions before Parliament. This opened them up for debate and slowed the passage of legislation.

When Diefenbaker formulated and attempted to implement his Latin American policy, he asserted a large measure of confidence and self-belief. However, these attributes often masked a need for support, or at least affirmation, of his policy choices. As Prime Minister, Diefenbaker sought this support from the general public and in Cabinet. For example, as public opinion turned against Canadian membership in the OAS Diefenbaker felt that this supported his decision to remain outside of it. Before he had achieved political success, however, support for his decisions was provided for him first by his mother and then, upon his marriage to Edna Brower, by his wife.

An outgoing and personable woman, Edna proved to be a valuable political asset, not only during social functions but also as a source of advice; he frequently phoned her from his office and asked for her opinions.<sup>115</sup> It is ironic that the man who became famous for charting his own path privately sought validation for his decisions from his wife. She was an integral part of both his careers and provided unwavering support.

This dichotomy between the public and private Diefenbaker, the man who was sure of his decisions and the man who sought advice, was focused on Edna. In 1945 she suffered a nervous breakdown and he could no longer rely on her as a sounding board for his opinions particularly after she entered the Homewood Sanatorium in Guelph. He grew more independent in his thinking and retreated into himself when it came to

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<sup>115</sup> Smith, 61.

planning policy and decisions. In many ways Edna moderated her husband's intense emotions and smoothed his inter-personal relationships. When Diefenbaker's brother Elmer crashed his car, a relatively frequent occurrence, he turned to Edna to soften the verbal blow he knew was forthcoming from his brother.<sup>116</sup>

Diefenbaker's devotion to her and her influence on him are perhaps best demonstrated by his acceptance of the Jack Atherton murder case. Atherton was a native of Saskatoon who was charged with manslaughter in relation to a railway accident in 1951. Diefenbaker was dealing with Edna's illness, was devoted to attending Parliament, and refused to take the case. Atherton appealed to Edna. On her death bed she pleaded with her husband to take the case because she believed Atherton was innocent.<sup>117</sup> Diefenbaker could not refuse her. He took the case and won.

Despite Diefenbaker's devotion to Edna, their marriage was centred around and subordinate to his political career and though she would plead with her husband to forsake politics, he could not.<sup>118</sup> Yet upon learning of her illness from advanced untreatable leukemia he turned his back on Parliament and spent the last six weeks of her life at her bedside. Such was his grief upon her death in 1951 that it left him temporarily unbalanced.<sup>119</sup>

Diefenbaker's next marriage was devoid of the need to balance his personal and public lives and did not provide the moderating influence that Edna had. Diefenbaker wed Olive Freeman Palmer in 1953. She was just as devoted to him as Edna but much more suited to politics. Where Edna had seen Diefenbaker's political career as

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<sup>116</sup> Holt, 140.

<sup>117</sup> Holt, 304.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, 142.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-188.

overtaking her life, Olive saw it as her life.<sup>120</sup> She was single-minded in her determination to assist her husband and her devout loyalty and belief in him served to enforce these same traits in him. She was an excellent politician's wife but did not act as a counter-balance to his intense nature and strong beliefs. Thus, Diefenbaker entered the Prime Minister's Office with his personal and public lives finally united on the task of leading Canada. He entered office and set to formulating government policy without a private sounding board and moderating influence.

With his victory in 1957 and his accession to position of Prime Minister, Diefenbaker was now in a position to shape the course of Canada's foreign policy. His policy towards the various Latin American nations was reflective of his own personal ideas. He was sure of the importance of the region, saw it as a means to mitigate the influence of the United States on Canada and he attempted to develop ties to its nations based on the strong personal relationships that he developed with their leaders. His desire to be personally involved in issues had grown out of his family influences, his life in Saskatchewan, and his careers in law and in politics.

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 197.

## CHAPTER 2 A GROWING AWARENESS

Though Diefenbaker's Latin American policy emphasized a more autonomous role for Canada and focused on a personal style of diplomacy, it did not constitute a complete break with the policies of the previous Liberal governments. In fact, it was influenced by the same geo-political factors that affected his predecessors. Furthermore, in many cases, while the overall policy goals had changed, Diefenbaker continued and built upon Liberal initiatives in Latin America. Thus, the Liberal policies provide an important background, indeed in many cases they were the foundation, for Diefenbaker's various Latin American policy initiatives.

The policies of Canada's post-war governments, headed by William Lyon Mackenzie King, Louis St. Laurent and John Diefenbaker respectively, toward Latin America were shaped by the geo-political realities of the Second World War and, following it, the Cold War. In this context, they were deeply influenced by Canada's relationship with the US, by the increasing desire of many Latin American nations for Canada to increase its presence in the region, by domestic pressures within Canada, and by a desire by Canadians to expand economically into the region.

The Second World War radically reshaped Canada's foreign policy priorities and led to an increased interest in Latin America. Though Canada formally gained independence from Britain in matters of foreign policy in 1931, there had been little impetus to expand Canadian representation and by extension Canada's political interests in Latin America, because of the Great Depression and Canada's strong ties to Europe.<sup>121</sup> At the beginning of the Second World War Canada had only six small trade missions in

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<sup>121</sup> Peter McKenna, Canada and the O.A.S.: From Dilettante to Full Partner (Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1995), 69.

the region and all its official diplomatic relations with Latin America were handled by Britain.<sup>122</sup> Yet, by 1957, when Diefenbaker led the Conservatives to electoral victory, Canada had 11 embassies and consulates in the region; by 1963, when the Liberals returned to government, there were Canadian delegations in every Latin American country.<sup>123</sup>

This growth began during the Second World War. As the war consumed Europe, Canada re-armed its military with the help of a domestic industrial sector that was spared the shells and bombs that devastated Britain's. Canada's manufacturing capacity and Gross Domestic Product more than tripled before the war's end. But, thanks to the swift and near total German victory on the continent during the course of the war, Canada was deprived of Europe's markets and resources. Alternatives were needed and Latin America appeared to offer just such a choice.<sup>124</sup>

Here is a theme that is repeated throughout much of Canada's developing relationship with Latin America under both the Liberal and Conservative governments of the twentieth century — the hope and belief that the region offered an alternative, both politically and economically, to Europe and to the United States. Yet it would prove to be a mirage, a largely illusionary opportunity. By 1990, 45 years after the end of the Second World War, Latin America as a market accounted for only 1.6% of Canada's total exports, a *decrease* of .2% from 1945.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Rochlin, 14.

<sup>123</sup> John Hilliker and Donald Barry, Canada's Department of External Affairs Vol. 2: Coming of Age, 1946-1968 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 175.

<sup>124</sup> J. C. M. Ogelsby, Gringos from the Far North: Essays in the History of Canadian-Latin American Relations, 1866-1968 (Toronto: Macmillian Company, 1976), 17.

<sup>125</sup> Rochlin, 238-40.

The hope of increased Canadian involvement in Latin America was not limited to Canadians. Many of the region's nations did, over the same period, call upon Canada to become more involved with the area in the hope that Canada, in some way, would mitigate the powerful influence of the US.<sup>126</sup> This proved to be just as unrealistic as the hope that Latin America would provide a credible alternative market for Canadians to the US. Still, despite the ultimate failure to diversify Canadian trade to Latin America, post-war Prime Ministers made the attempt.

Canadian attempts to expand into Latin America were complicated by the presence of Britain and the US in the region. Since the various nations of the region achieved independence from Spain in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, first the British, and then the US, established themselves as regional hegemons. Of the three early post-war Canadian Prime Ministers (King, St. Laurent and Diefenbaker) only King expressed deep concern about the potential problems Canada could face in the region because of the presence of the US. Thus, under King, Canada's first diplomatic forays into the region during the Second World War were highly tentative. Despite the enthusiasm of O. D. Skelton, the Under Secretary of State for External Affairs, who saw Latin America as a region growing in importance, King was against any rapid expansion of the Canadian presence there.<sup>127</sup> King was traditionally cautious when it came to the expansion of Canada's world involvement; he feared that formal Canadian participation in international bodies would limit Canada's autonomy. When these cautionary tendencies were reinforced by King's concern that developing relations with the Americas might complicate Canada's relations with Britain and the US, he turned away from the region. He told Skelton that,

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<sup>126</sup> McKenna, 72.

<sup>127</sup> O. D. Skelton, "Memorandum to Prime Minister" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-1941 Part I (ed.) David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 51-52.

“South America will be a trouble zone while the war continues.”<sup>128</sup> Thus, during the latter King years, there was only modest expansion of Canada’s relations with Latin American countries, such as the creation of consulates, but not embassies in Argentina and Brazil.<sup>129</sup>

King’s premonition about the region proved accurate, both in the short and long term. In the short term, the case of Argentina is instructive. When the US entered the Second World War, it exerted tremendous pressure on Latin American countries to join the allied cause against the Axis powers. Most did. Argentina, however, because of its long history of close relations with Germany, initially refused to do so. The US Administration began to press Argentina to sever those relations and moved to isolate it internationally.<sup>130</sup> In light of British support for the US actions, in 1944, the Canadian government agreed to suspend official relations with Argentina.<sup>131</sup> But the situation with Argentina did not last, as the Argentine government quickly cut off relations with the Axis powers, and when the US and Britain restored diplomatic recognition, Canada quickly followed suit.<sup>132</sup> King’s premonition was borne out in the longer term when nearly twenty years later the Diefenbaker government faced pressure from the US to have Canada join the OAS. As shall be shown in chapter five, Diefenbaker refused to acquiesce to the US pressure and this led to a strain in the Canada-US relationship.

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<sup>128</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King, “Memorandum to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-1941 Part I (ed.) David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 50.

<sup>129</sup> King, 50.

<sup>130</sup> N. A. Robinson, “Memorandum from the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1944-1945 Part II (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1990), 1782.

<sup>131</sup> H. W. Wrong, “Memorandum from Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Chiefs of Division” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1944-1945 Part II (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1990), 1786.

<sup>132</sup> King, “Secretary of State for External Affairs to Chargé d’Affaires in Argentina” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1944-1945 Part II (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1990), 1793.

Examining the differing responses to US pressure by King and Diefenbaker helps one gain a better understanding of the latter's Latin American policy. While both leaders were concerned about Canada falling into the US orbit when Canadian and US interests did conflict in Latin America, King most often saw little gain in refusing to acquiesce to US requests; thus, he usually agreed to follow US policy suggestions. Diefenbaker, on the other hand, believed that the cost to Canada of opposing US requests was less than the cost to Canada's freedom of action of not doing so. Thus, when a conflict arose between Canadian and US interests in the region, Diefenbaker was prepared to refuse to go along with the US government.

The Argentine incident is also illustrative of the various problems that consistently plagued Canada's relationship with Latin America. First, Canadian policies towards the region were often influenced by events outside it. In this case, the necessity of defeating the Axis led to actions that were counter-productive to the creation of an influential Canadian presence there. Later, during the Diefenbaker years, it was the necessity of confronting and defeating communism that led to Canada's refusal to fill the gap in trade that the US embargo created in Cuba. Second, any Canadian policy in the region had to contend with the powerful influence exerted by the US. The fear of being caught between Latin American interests on one side and US interests on the other was a serious consideration with which the governments of King, St. Laurent and Diefenbaker all had to contend. Third, there were often disagreements within the Department of External Affairs over the conduct of Canada's Latin American policies. Canadian officials located in Latin America sometimes disagreed with Department policies shaped in Ottawa but implemented in Latin America. In the case of relations with Argentina



during the Second World War, Hugh Keenleyside, the Assistant Under Secretary of State for External Affairs and future Ambassador to Mexico, saw US efforts to coerce Argentina as counter-productive, having the effect of strengthening the very government that they did not support.<sup>133</sup> Compounding his frustration, he was informed by the Brazilian embassy that his sentiment was shared by many in the region.<sup>134</sup> In this way Canada ended up supporting policies that had little support in the region, thus hindering efforts to strengthen its relationship with the region.

External events indeed created serious problems for Canada in its attempts to build a stronger relationship with Latin America. In the post-war world Canada had to contend with a very different dynamic, both in terms of its capabilities and the context of international relations, than existed prior to the war. These dynamics often shaped Canada's Latin American policy.

The end of the Second World War saw Canada utterly transformed; so was its relationship with Latin America. From a nation that carried little weight in the international arena, Canada emerged with the world's third largest navy, the fourth largest air force and with over one million men and women having served in its armed forces.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps an even greater influence was the growing strength of the Canadian economy. Before the war Canada had been on par, in terms of attracting external capital, with Latin America. Following the war, Canada far surpassed the region.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> H. L. Keenleyside, "Memorandum from Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1944-1945 Part II (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1990), 1787-88.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 1787.

<sup>135</sup> Andrew Cohen, While Canada Slept: How we lost our place in the World (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003), 44.

<sup>136</sup> Rochlin, 33.

Not only was Canada's relationship with Latin America transformed by Canada's newfound economic and military strength but the Canadian-Latin American relationship was affected by Canada's new position in the world. The Second World War had torn apart the European Great Power system that had existed since the Treaty of Westphalia. In place of this multi-power world there emerged a bi-polar one. Two nations, the Soviet Union and the US, were predominant in terms of geo-political power. Canada was geographically in the middle of the two great powers but there was little doubt as to where its allegiance lay. In the struggle between the US and the Soviet Union, Canada was firmly on the side of the west.

The importance of this new reality to Canada's relationship with Latin America is difficult to overstate. Britain, which for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had dominated Latin America both economically and politically, had a diminished presence in the region. Canada, which had only gained independence in its foreign policy less than a decade before the war began with the Statute of Westminster, was no longer subservient to Britain but rather a member of equal standing in the new Commonwealth that had replaced the rapidly shrinking British Empire. Canada could chart a course in its relationship with Latin America that was independent of Britain.

But this did not result in Canada being able to chart its own course in Latin America. Its relationship with the region was complicated by its relationship with the US, the leader of the western alliance. Canada now had to develop its relationship with Latin America in the context of the Cold War and the US attempt to contain communism.

Another factor in the post-war world order which affected Canada's Latin American policy was the expansion of the Department of External Affairs. No longer

willing to rely on the British to act as an intermediary on its behalf, the Canadian government began to extend diplomatic recognition to numerous countries, including those in Latin America. Money and men of talent flowed into Canada's Department of External Affairs and its size increased correspondingly. This increase in size, however, did little to increase the influence that the various members of the Department stationed in Latin America wielded in shaping the Latin American policies of the various post-war Canadian governments. The Canadian relationship with Argentina is once again instructive as it illustrated the distance between Department officials stationed in Latin America and the government in Ottawa.

Throughout the early post-war years, King refused to normalize Canadian-Argentine relations. This policy was made forcefully clear in response to a request by General Andrew McNaughton to visit Argentina in 1946. McNaughton, Canada's highest ranking general during the Second World War, was to attend a ceremony in Brazil, representing the Canadian government at the inauguration of President Eurico Dutra.<sup>137</sup> He had hoped to visit Argentina at the end of his trip to Brazil.<sup>138</sup> The motives for the visit can only be guessed at, though Undersecretary of State for External Affairs Norman Robertson called them "mischievous."<sup>139</sup> King, however, was not amused and ordered McNaughton to stay away from Argentina, particularly as his visit could be misunderstood by the United States.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> John Swettenham, *McNaughton: Volume 3 1944-1966* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1969), 104.

<sup>138</sup> N.A.R. Robertson "Memorandum from the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister" in *Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946* (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1838.

<sup>139</sup> Robinson, 1838.

<sup>140</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King, "Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in Brazil" in *Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946* (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1839.

The decision to overrule McNaughton was done over the objections of Canadian diplomats in Latin America. Following the decision, Canada's Ambassador there, Warwick Chipman, who had previously served as Canadian Ambassador to Chile, sent a strongly worded rebuke to his superiors in Ottawa. He suggested that in regard to Argentina, Canada should, "have a policy of our own, uncompromised by the oscillations of Washington and unaffected by the bias that seems to prevail in so much United States thinking, official and unofficial, when directed to this quarter."<sup>141</sup> He went on to say that Canada should allow the Argentine government to act before prejudging it, particularly in light of the fact that it was democratically elected. He ended with a direct attack on the Department's decision to forbid McNaughton from traveling to Argentina, stating, "we should in future not distinguish in treatment between Argentina and other countries of the continent."<sup>142</sup>

The Department's response was both equivocal and not surprising. Responding to Chipman's pleas for an independent policy towards Argentina, Acting Undersecretary of State Hume Wrong stated that "our policy towards Argentina has been our own and will continue to remain so."<sup>143</sup> Yet in the same paragraph he explained why Canada must follow the US lead: "our economic stake in the cooperation of the United States and Canada is so much greater than our interest in cooperation with any other country of this

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<sup>141</sup> Warwick Chipman, "Ambassador in Argentina to Secretary of State for External Affairs" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1847.

<sup>142</sup> Chipman, 1847.

<sup>143</sup> H. H. Wrong, "Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in Argentina" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1848.

hemisphere that we cannot remain indifferent to the views of the United States when strongly expressed.”<sup>144</sup>

The Department of External Affairs was often at odds with the King government over its Latin American policy. It argued that a more consistent and independent Canadian trade policy towards Latin America was desirable. In 1946, Norman Robertson used a request for confirmation of Canada’s arms sale policy to Latin American countries as an opportunity to outline three potential positions that Canada could take — a continued refusal to sell arms to Latin American countries; the adoption of a policy that always paralleled that of the US, or the sale of arms freely to all countries.<sup>145</sup> Robertson recommended the first option, as the second option assumed that Canadian and US interests in Latin America were identical and he believed that they were not.<sup>146</sup>

King ignored Robertson’s recommendation and directed Pearson, then Canadian Ambassador to the US, to inquire of the US State Department if an informal understanding could be reached between Canada and the US whereby the two countries would pursue parallel policies with regard to arms sales to Latin America.<sup>147</sup> The State Department thereafter agreed to keep the Canadian government informally up to date on its policies in order to better facilitate policy co-ordination between the two nations.<sup>148</sup>

Robertson was a career bureaucrat in the Department of External Affairs and served as Undersecretary to the Liberals and then to the Progressive Conservatives under

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<sup>144</sup> Wrong, 1848.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 1973.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 1973.

<sup>147</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King, “Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in United States” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1979.

<sup>148</sup> H. H. Wrong, “Ambassador in United States to Secretary of State for External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1985.

Diefenbaker. Although Diefenbaker would initially have reservations concerning Robertson, both of Diefenbaker's Secretaries of State for External Affairs, Sidney Smith and Howard Green, trusted him and he would prove to be a source of continuity in the Department linking the Liberal and Conservative policies.<sup>149</sup> Ironically, considering Diefenbaker's long held fears that Department officials would remain loyal to the Liberals, Robertson's views on the importance of US influence on Canadian foreign policy were more in line with Diefenbaker's than with King's or St. Laurent's. In fact, the Department generally supported Diefenbaker's Latin American policy.

Not least among the new dynamics of the post-war world that Canadian governments had to take into account while creating their Latin American policies was the status of the US as the predominant western power. The US government had long felt that Latin America fell under its "sphere of influence." Dating back to the declaration of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 when it affirmed that the Western Hemisphere was the exclusive zone of influence of the US, it often opposed external influences in the region and reserved the right to act unilaterally. Furthermore, as the US assumed the role of the leading western power, its geographic and historical closeness to Canada meant that, by extension, its influence on Canadian policy towards Latin America correspondingly increased.

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the US often adopted a schizophrenic approach to Canadian participation in inter-American affairs. In 1933, it objected to Canada's joining the Pan-American Union, the precursor to the OAS, using the procedural excuse that it was for American republics only and Canada was a

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<sup>149</sup> Hilliker, 147-151.

constitutional monarchy.<sup>150</sup> However, when the question of Canadian membership came up in 1936 and 1938 the US indicated that it would in fact welcome Canadian membership.<sup>151</sup> The US government changed its position again in 1942 refusing to support a referendum question that invited Canada to join.<sup>152</sup>

This early schizophrenic reaction from the US government was based on a conflicted view of Canada's place in the inter-American system. On one hand, Canadian participation was highly valued. It lent legitimacy to US positions because it was believed that Latin American nations would place more trust in a smaller nation with no designs on hemispheric domination.<sup>153</sup> On the other hand, there was a view that Canada was still firmly in the British orbit.<sup>154</sup> Though the US emerged from the war with a special relationship with Britain, US President Harry Truman remained suspicious of the British Empire and Britain's determination to sustain it.

US suspicion of British motives was prevalent in Washington's refusal to support Canadian membership in the Pan-American Union in 1942. King, who had no desire to create problems with the allies and was cautious by nature, immediately backed away from the idea of joining the organization. He felt that "until the attitude of all members of the Union becomes more clearly determined ... I do not believe that it would be

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<sup>150</sup> Peter McKenna, Canada and the O.A.S.: From Dilettante to Full Partner (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995) 69-70.

<sup>151</sup> N. A. Robinson "Memorandum from the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1942-1943 (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1980), 906-907.

<sup>152</sup> Leighton McCarthy "Minister in the United States to Secretary of State for External Affairs" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1942-1943 (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1980), 904.

<sup>153</sup> McKenna, 71.

<sup>154</sup> McKenna, 72.

advisable for Canada to take any initiative in relation to membership.”<sup>155</sup> Canadian expansion towards the region would instead be limited to opening new delegations in various countries.

The Canadian-US relationship continued to complicate Canada’s relationship with Latin America even after the Second World War when Canada essentially planned its foreign policy independent of Britain. In the postwar period, the US wanted the Canadian government to support its policies and initiatives in Latin America, regardless of what Canadian interests in the region might be. This pressure was applied to both Liberal and Conservative governments, although the reaction of these governments differed.

An immediate example of the Liberal reaction related to the 1946 Argentine Presidential elections. The US had hardly been mollified by Argentina’s sudden allegiance to the allied cause during the Second World War and the US government maintained export controls to that country. When Juan Péron won the 1946 Presidential elections, the US State Department was determined to make its displeasure felt and continued the economic actions against Argentina.<sup>156</sup> Such economic measures, to be effective, needed the support of other nations, including Canada.

At this time, the Department of External Affairs was under new management, as King had decided to separate the External Affairs portfolio from the Prime Minister and appointed Louis St. Laurent as the first Secretary of State for External Affairs.<sup>157</sup> St. Laurent differed from King in his belief that Canada needed to be more engaged in the

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<sup>155</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King “Prime Minister to Minister in the United States” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1942-1943 (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1980), 911.

<sup>156</sup> Lester B. Pearson “Ambassador in United States to Secretary of State External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1831.

<sup>157</sup> Prior to 1946, the Prime Minister maintained the portfolio of External Affairs.



world, not less. Thus, the Department proposed relaxing export controls to Argentina, particularly of non-strategic commodities. This would not have increased trade to Argentina in any meaningful way but would have greatly simplified the bureaucratic process for Canadian exporters.<sup>158</sup> The Department felt that this was a reasonable policy, particularly in light of the fact that it believed that, “the United States was not accomplishing its political objectives vis-à-vis Argentina by means of economic restrictions.”<sup>159</sup>

But this was not the feeling in the US State Department where officials “could not over-emphasize the importance attached to the maintenance of present Canadian controls over exports to Argentina.”<sup>160</sup> Lester B. Pearson, the current Canadian Ambassador to the US and future Secretary of State for External Affairs, reported to St. Laurent that with regard to this issue “there is no doubt in my mind that a refusal on our part to do so would be taken with very bad grace.”<sup>161</sup> Neither Mackenzie King nor Louis St. Laurent wanted to fall into the bad graces of the US, particularly over Argentina, and so Canada maintained its export controls.<sup>162</sup> Though these controls were reluctantly enforced, the government made sure that, for appearance’s sake, Canadian policy closely mirrored US policy.

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<sup>158</sup> Lester B. Pearson “Memorandum from Embassy in the United States to the Department of State of United States” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1830-31.

<sup>159</sup> Lester B. Pearson “Ambassador in United States to Secretary of State External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1829.

<sup>160</sup> Lester B. Pearson “Ambassador in the United States to Secretary of State for External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1832.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 1833.

<sup>162</sup> Lester B. Pearson “Ambassador in the United States to Secretary of State of United States” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1841.

The Liberal government continued to impose limitations on Canadian exports to Argentina, again in conjunction with the United States, even after the normalization of Canadian-Argentine relations. In June of 1946, it forbade the Canadian Power Boat Company of Montreal from selling motor torpedo boats to the Argentine navy.<sup>163</sup> This matter was not referred to Cabinet, a normal procedure when Canadian companies request the sale of arms or require permission to export military goods, reflecting the unanimity of opinion regarding the limits on normal relations with Argentina.<sup>164</sup>

The example of Argentina demonstrates certain similarities between the Liberal and Conservative governments. The Liberal willingness to follow the US lead in terms of trading potential military goods did not transfer over into non-strategic goods and six months after the averted purchase of torpedo boats the Canadian government gave its approval to the sale of Canadian Army trucks to the Argentine government. This time the purchase was referred to Cabinet where it was deemed that the trucks were “surplus.”<sup>165</sup> The government therefore approved the sale of 850 trucks to the Argentine government.

This decision was very similar to the decision by the Diefenbaker government some 13 years later to allow non-strategic sales to revolutionary Cuba. Once again, in response to US pressure, Canada controlled the sale of strategic goods but continued to maintain trade relations in the area of non-strategic ones.

The primary difference in how the St. Laurent and Diefenbaker governments dealt with the US related to the relative importance placed by each on the Canadian-American

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<sup>163</sup>H. H. Wrong, “Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Deputy Minister of Trade and Commerce” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1849.

<sup>164</sup> This information is based on the lack of any Cabinet records concerning the Canadian Power Boat Company’s request.

<sup>165</sup> “Sale of Army Trucks to Argentina” November 12<sup>th</sup>, 1946. Government of Canada Cabinet Conclusion. National Archives Canada, RG2, Privy Council Office, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2639, Reel T-2364 , 4-5.

relationship. St. Laurent, like King, accepted Canada's geo-political orbit around the US and deduced that this required a special relationship between Ottawa and Washington. Thus the influence of the US acted as a pull factor, dragging Canada along with it on major foreign policy issues. A quick economic calculation was done by the Liberal government and its formula revealed that co-operation was in Canada's national interest. For Diefenbaker, that formula was flawed, as Canada's national interest lay not in necessarily following the path chosen by the US. Though in many instances the interests of the US and Canada overlapped, at times they did not and at other times they were in opposition. In these latter moments the US government exerted pressure on the Canadian government to accommodate itself to the American position. The result of this pressure on the Conservative government was very different than on the previous Liberal one. The more pressure the US government exerted in the face of Canadian opposition, the greater Diefenbaker's desire to resist it. This led to new tensions between Washington and Ottawa over Latin America.

For example, it was thanks in part to US pressure to join the OAS that Diefenbaker ultimately rejected the idea of Canadian membership in the organization. US pressure to join the economic embargo on Cuba following the latter's revolution only strengthened Diefenbaker's desire to stay the course and maintain political and economic relations with that country. With regard to post-war Argentina, it would not be difficult to imagine a Diefenbaker government allowing McNaughton to visit.

The Liberal government also continued to mirror US policy with regard to the sale of arms to various Latin American countries. A number of Latin American nations saw in Canada an opportunity to circumvent the US decision not to sell arms to nations in

the region. Unfortunately for them, their hopes that Canada would take a different position from the US were soon dashed. In short order, not just Argentina, but Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Chile all requested arms from Canada and their requests were all subsequently turned down.<sup>166</sup>

The Liberal government followed a similar path when confronted by the “Chinese wall” that the US had erected around Cuba, setting up tariffs and subsidies that virtually precluded the sale of Canadian wheat to it.<sup>167</sup> Émile Vaillancourt, the Canadian Ambassador to Cuba, requested instructions from the Canadian government, asking if he should co-operate with the US or oppose it.<sup>168</sup> Lester Pearson, who had just become the new Secretary of State for External Affairs, informed him that it was not desirable to openly oppose the policies of the United States and he should “take advantage of every opportunity to emphasize “Canadian-United States collaboration.”<sup>169</sup>

US influence on Canadian policies towards Latin America also eclipsed Canada’s strong British connection. How far Canada had moved from the British orbit to the American one was highlighted by the decision of the Canadian government to withhold recognition of the Venezuelan government until the United States had extended it.<sup>170</sup> The decision to wait for US action was taken in spite of the fact that Britain had already recognized the new government and that the Canadian government saw no reason not to

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<sup>166</sup> N. A. Robertson, “Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1973.

<sup>167</sup> E. Vaillancourt, “Minister in Cuba to Secretary of State for External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1916-19.

<sup>168</sup> Vaillancourt, 1919.

<sup>169</sup> Lester Pearson, “Secretary of State for External Affairs to Minister in Cuba” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1919-20.

<sup>170</sup> Lester B. Pearson “Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in United States” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1947 (ed.) Hector Mackenzie (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1993), 1826.

extend it.<sup>171</sup> Though Diefenbaker opposed this Liberal shift of emphasis from Britain to the US, the reality was that his own foreign policy was also conceived largely without much consideration of the British connection.

It is too simplistic to say that the Liberals always followed the US lead in Latin America and Diefenbaker always opposed it. Both Liberal and Conservative governments, at different times and for different reasons, supported and resisted US influence on their Latin American policies. An example of the Liberal government charting a more autonomous course for Canada's Latin American policy was the position it took on Canada joining the OAS.

Despite the importance he placed on a positive relationship with the US, King continued to avoid establishing formal ties with the OAS even when pressured by the US. King's desire to avoid an organizational entanglement was reinforced by the schizophrenic approach taken by the US toward Canada and the organization during the Second World War. In many ways the approach of the US government increased the Canadian government's fear of being stuck between it and the countries of Latin America.

Following the Second World War, US concern that Canadian actions were an extension of British interests was greatly diminished. The US now viewed Canadian membership in the OAS in a positive light. Thus at various times it pressured the Canadian government to take steps to join the organization. In each instance the Canadian government politely refused.

The nadir of the pre-1957 US effort to bring Canada formally into the pan-American system occurred in 1947, as the Pan-American Union prepared to hold its 1948

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 1826.

Conference in Bogota. The US effort was spearheaded by US Senator Arthur Hendrick Vandenberg who stated that it was, “one of the great ambitious of my life” to have Canada join the Union.<sup>172</sup> Vandenberg was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and wielded great influence in the US government.<sup>173</sup>

He saw Canadian involvement in the formal defense of the Americas as essential. He was an advocate of a strong inter-American defense system and helped negotiate the Rio Pact in which an attack on any American state was to be met with collective action by the others.<sup>174</sup> This created the requirement of a regional security zone, as Latin American nations could not be expected to fight on behalf of the US if it was to become involved in a conflict outside of the Americas. Vandenberg saw the security zone as reaching from pole to pole in the Western Hemisphere, thus including Canada, and he hoped that Canada would “cease to be a ward of the inter-American system and become more of a partner.”<sup>175</sup>

Both Pearson and King, however, reiterated Canada’s desire to remain outside the organization.<sup>176</sup> King hoped to avoid the whole question and preferred, “not to be invited to attend in any capacity which would seem to commit us to later association with the Inter-American Defence arrangement or with the Pan-American Union.”<sup>177</sup> This desire to remain outside formal inter-American commitments was further outlined in a

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<sup>172</sup> H. H. Wrong, “Ambassador in United States to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1947 (ed.) Norman Hillmer and Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1993), 1028.

<sup>173</sup> McKenna, 74.

<sup>174</sup> Arthur H. Vandenberg Jr. (ed.) The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1952), 366-367.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

<sup>176</sup> McKenna, 74.

<sup>177</sup> Louis St. Laurent, “Secretary of State for External Affairs to Chargé d’Affaires in Brazil” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1947 (ed.) Norman Hillmer and Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1993), 1033.

memorandum circulated to the Canadian Cabinet where a number of reasons were given for staying “aloof from United States policies and attitudes towards Latin America.”<sup>178</sup>

The Liberal governments’ refusal to join the organization was not based on any desire to oppose US policies but rather to retain Canada’s freedom of action regarding Latin America.

The appearance of freedom was of great benefit to Canada. There was little love lost between Latin America and the US following the Second World War. As US influence in the region increased and Cold War paranoia mounted, the US Administration acted against democratically elected governments (from Argentina to Guatemala). Hence more open resentment towards the US in the region grew. When US Vice-President Richard Nixon traveled to South America in 1955 as part of a good-will tour he was roundly booed in Venezuela where rioting students surrounded his car and forced the driver to return to the US Embassy.<sup>179</sup> Meanwhile, Canada sought to appease both sides, appealing to Latin American nations as a country that also had the dynamic of having to deal with the US colossus, and to the US as a steadfast ally.

Diefenbaker was not inclined to continue this balancing act when he replaced St. Laurent in 1957. He supported the US when he believed that it was necessary and pursued a more autonomous Canadian policy in Latin America when he thought it benefited the Canadian national interest. He saw little need to pretend to back US claims in order to reassure Washington that Canada remained a strong ally. He believed his

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<sup>178</sup> “Canadian Participation in the Pan-American System” Memorandum to Cabinet in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1947 (ed.) Norman Hillmer and Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1993), 1033.

<sup>179</sup> Lars Schoultz, Beneath the United States: A History of U.S. Policy toward Latin America (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 351.

public support for the United States during the Cold War and his attacks on Communism made this self-evident.

Another influence on Canadian policy towards Latin America in the post-war years was the pressure exerted by a number of nations in the region to draw Canada further into the inter-American system. As Canada emerged as a country with its own foreign policy and opened up its own embassies and missions in Washington, Paris, Tokyo, Amsterdam and Antwerp the countries with which it shared the Western Hemisphere began to pressure the Canadian government to also expand diplomatically into Latin America.<sup>180</sup> This pressure initially came from Brazil and Argentina, a fact that fortuitously coincided with the Department of External Affairs' own ranking of the Latin American nations that were most important to Canada, a ranking which put Brazil and Argentina at the top.<sup>181</sup>

Brazil faced an interesting problem early in the Second World War as it was governed by Getúlio Vargas and his Estado Nôvo party (which some had accused of being fascist.) At the beginning of the war Vargas was torn over which side to support, the Allies (who had the United States moving increasing into their camp) or the Germans with whom Brazil had strong ties.<sup>182</sup> He eventually bowed to US pressure and sided with the allies in 1942. However, he initially tried to play the two sides against each other, offering minimum support to both. During this period, he sought to increase Brazil's connections with the US, Britain and Canada.

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<sup>180</sup> J.C.M. Ogelsby, Gringos from the Far North: Essays in the History of Canadian-Latin American Relations, 1866-1968 (Toronto: MacMillian Company of Canada), 40.

<sup>181</sup> O. D. Skelton, "Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-41 (ed.) David Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 49-50.

<sup>182</sup> Ronald M. Schneider, Order and Progress: A Political History of Brazil (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 148-149.



Vargas's interest in developing a positive relationship with the Canadian government was perhaps best exemplified by his decision not to nationalize Brazilian Traction, a Canadian-owned company that was one of the largest in Brazil.<sup>183</sup> Part of his efforts to nationalize the Brazilian economy entailed imposing policies that financially hurt the company, such as the order that the company use Brazilian coal at least 10% of the time in its operations, but the company remained in Canadian hands.

Brazil's attempt to navigate between the two sides at the beginning of the Second World War was also paralleled, as mentioned earlier, by Argentina. Argentina maintained its neutrality far longer than Brazil (it entered the war in 1945 on the side of the Allies) but faced the possibility of isolation for its efforts to create an independent, neutral South American economic bloc.<sup>184</sup> It actively sought to avoid this by strengthening its relationships with its hemispheric neighbours, including Canada.

The Canadian response to Brazilian and Argentine overtures was initially muted under the Liberals but would become more animated under Diefenbaker (see Chapter Six). King was primarily concerned about the financial cost of diplomatic expansion into the Americas and only reluctantly agreed to open missions in Argentina and Brazil.<sup>185</sup> At this point Canadian government officials demonstrated their naive understanding of inter-American politics. They had assumed that opening missions in Brazil and Argentina would be understood as a tentative first step into the system. What they had not taken into account was the relationship of Chile to its southern neighbours.

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<sup>183</sup> Ogelsby, 136.

<sup>184</sup> Alberto Conil Paz and Gustavo Ferrari, *Argentina's Foreign Policy, 1930-1962* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1966), 60-61. [translated by John J. Kennedy]

<sup>185</sup> Ogelsby, 44.

Chile viewed itself as on par, in terms of international prestige, with Argentina and Brazil and for the Canadian government to open official diplomatic relations with these countries and not include Chile was a diplomatic affront to the Chilean government.<sup>186</sup> But the Canadian government ranked Chile in the second tier of Latin American countries, along with Mexico and Cuba.<sup>187</sup> Further complicating the situation was the personal ambition of the Chilean Consul General Luis E. Feliú who King suspected of pushing for a formal exchange of ministers between the two nations so that he could earn promotion in rank.<sup>188</sup> When Chile requested that Canada establish an embassy there, King responded angrily, informing the Chilean government that Canada did not plan any diplomatic expansions in the near future.<sup>189</sup>

He was forced to change his mind, however, when faced with pressure from the US government. The US Department of State felt that “from the point of view of general ‘hemispheric defense’ considerations, it would be very helpful if Canada could meet Chilean sensibilities in this matter by including Chile in the projected diplomatic representation in South America.”<sup>190</sup> Faced with this pressure, King relented and Canada’s Ambassador to Argentina was also given accreditation for Chile.<sup>191</sup>

The Mexican government also shared the desire for closer diplomatic relations with Canada. This was not a new post-war phenomenon but one that had deep historical

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<sup>186</sup> Ogelsby, 45.

<sup>187</sup> Skelton, 50.

<sup>188</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King, Notation added to Memorandum from O. D. Skelton, in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-41 (ed.) David Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 65.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>190</sup> N. A. Robinson, “Memorandum from Acting Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-41 (ed.) David Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 70.

<sup>191</sup> William Lyon Mackenzie King, “Secretary of State for External Affairs to Dominions Secretary” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-41 (ed.) David Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 76.

roots. Mexico, faced with the same problem as Canada in the form of US economic dominance of its trade, periodically looked north to Canada as a potential solution.<sup>192</sup>

Both the Liberal and Conservative governments, as chapter four will make clear, would respond to the Mexican government's overtures.

Following the Canadian decision to open missions in South America, the Mexican government began to press the Canadian government for a similar exchange, pointing out that "Mexico is one of the most important countries in the Latin American group."<sup>193</sup>

Canada held off for a few years and then in 1943 began the process of opening a mission. Before the official exchange had been completed, the Canadian government decided that it wanted to upgrade the level of the diplomatic relationship and contacted the Mexican Ambassador to the US to offer an exchange of ambassadors instead of ministers.<sup>194</sup> The Mexican Ambassador informed the Canadian government that he did not need to refer it back to his government and immediately accepted the offer.<sup>195</sup>

This enthusiasm for Canadian diplomatic accreditation was echoed by a large number of Latin American countries, for much the same reason — the hope that Canada could mitigate the political and economic influence of the US. By the end of the Second World War Canada had received requests for the establishment of formal diplomatic ties from Bolivia, Colombia, Uruguay, Ecuador and Panama.<sup>196</sup> The King and St. Laurent

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<sup>192</sup> Ogelsby, 66.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>194</sup> Mexico and Britain had broken off official contact in 1938 over the nationalization of British petroleum interests by the Mexican government. Thus Canadian contact with the Mexican government was carried out by Canadian and Mexican representatives to the United States.

<sup>195</sup> H. A. Allard, "Memorandum by First Secretary, Embassy in United States", in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-41 (ed.) David Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 48.

<sup>196</sup> R. M. Macdonnell, "Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in Peru", in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-41 (ed.) David Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 39.

governments, however, continued to expand representation in Latin America at a slow pace and by 1957, Canada had still not established official recognition in all the nations of the region. It was a task that was completed under Diefenbaker.

The attempts by Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and other Latin American nations to draw Canada closer into the inter-American system were not limited to pushing for diplomatic recognition. There were numerous attempts by these governments to persuade Canada to join the Pan-American Union and later the OAS in the hopes of getting Canada to formally commit itself to involvement in the pan-American system. These efforts ultimately failed, as neither the post-war Liberal governments of King and St. Laurent nor the Diefenbaker government succumbed to the pressure.

This pressure on Canada from Latin American countries to join the Union during and after the Second World War was constant and fairly uniform. In 1942, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Honduras, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, Haiti, Paraguay, Uruguay, Guatemala and Mexico all favoured Canadian participation in the Pan-American Union.<sup>197</sup> In 1947, pressure again mounted for Canadian participation at the 1948 Conference and the Canadian government was forced to admit that a failure to join on its part could strain relations with countries in Latin America.<sup>198</sup>

In response to this pressure, as well as pressure from the US, the Department of External Affairs offered seven reasons why Canada should not join the Union. First, Canada was more of an Atlantic country than an American one. Second, Canada did not

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<sup>197</sup> N. A. Robinson, "Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister", in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1942-43 (ed.) John Hilliker (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1980), 905.

<sup>198</sup> "Memorandum to Cabinet" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1947 (ed.) Norman Hillmer and Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1993), 1039.

want to be caught in the middle of disputes between the United States and Latin America. Third, not joining had as yet not hurt Canadian relations with the region. Fourth, the Canadian government preferred to avoid regional defense arrangements. Fifth, there was no public support in Canada for membership. Sixth, there were possible complications with joining because of Canada's commitment to the Commonwealth. Finally, there was a manpower shortage in the Department of External Affairs and joining would obligate Canada to open embassies in every Latin American nation.<sup>199</sup>

These reasons were hardly compelling. One of the seven points was contradicted in the same memo when concerns were expressed over the negative effect that a refusal to join would have on relations with Latin America. Despite both US and Latin American pressure to join the Pan-American Union the simple fact was that the governments of St. Laurent and Diefenbaker were uncertain about making a formal commitment to the region. King, on the other hand, had not been convinced that Latin America was important to Canada.<sup>200</sup> He dealt with the region's pleas for greater involvement by slowly increasing the Canadian government's presence in the region while continuing to refuse to consider membership.

Canadian relations with Latin America during the post-war period were also often subject to, and influenced by, domestic pressures within Canada. Though there was little awareness in Canada of Latin America, the uncertainty of the public's reaction acted as a negative force, slowing down Canadian integration into the inter-American system. In 1948 the lack of Canadian public reaction to the controversial adoption of an anti-colonial bill at the Pan-American Union Conference in Bogota was noted by the King

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<sup>199</sup> "Memorandum to Cabinet", 1039-40.

<sup>200</sup> McKenna, 73.

government.<sup>201</sup> A similar lack of press and public reaction was also noted by the Department of External Affairs in 1953, when the Liberals under St. Laurent were once again pressured to take a more active role in the OAS.<sup>202</sup> This trend continued after Diefenbaker and the Conservatives took power. When Howard Green called for the public's input into the question of Canadian membership in the OAS less than 50 people responded.<sup>203</sup> The Canadian public, it appeared, was not overly interested in Latin America, although events in Cuba would suggest otherwise.

On the other hand, Canada's post-war governments were also influenced by economic considerations, specifically a desire to increase Canada's external trade with the Latin American region. Canadian interest was exemplified by two trade missions to the region, one sent by King and one by St. Laurent in 1941 and 1953, respectively. The trade missions were both examples of personal diplomacy and were the idea of, and centered around, senior Ministers. However, in both cases, the result was the same, as their efforts ultimately failed to make major gains in Canada's trade with the region. It was a result that preceded, and in many ways foreshadowed, the results of Diefenbaker's own personal diplomacy in Latin America.

The first trade mission was the brainchild of King's Minister of Trade and Commerce, James MacKinnon, who sought to put his own stamp on the Department and thus sought out new avenues for Canadian trade.<sup>204</sup> Latin America offered him the

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<sup>201</sup> "Memorandum from America and Far East Division", in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1948 (ed.) Hector Mackenzie (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1994), 1870.

<sup>202</sup> Jules Leger, "Memorandum from Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1953 (ed.) Donald Barry (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1991).

<sup>203</sup> Howard Green, "Survey of Public Correspondence regarding Canadian opinion on the Organization of America States" Diefenbaker Centre Canada Archives. Series VI, Vol. 572, File #890 – Organization of American States – General – 1960-1962, 434296-7.

<sup>204</sup> Dana Wilgress, Memoirs (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1967) 116.

opportunity to do both. After an abortive first attempt (he came down with a case of kidney stones in Barranquilla, Columbia),<sup>205</sup> he led a mission that visited Brazil, Chile, Peru, Argentina, Ecuador and Uruguay.<sup>206</sup> During his visit, MacKinnon negotiated trade agreements with all six nations.<sup>207</sup>

MacKinnon felt that the success of the mission warranted a return trip to complete the tour of Latin America. Thus in 1946 he traveled to Mexico, Panama, Columbia and the five Central American republics.<sup>208</sup> It was another successful mission in terms of treaties signed as both Mexico and Columbia concluded agreements with the Canadian government.<sup>209</sup> The mission was less successful in Central America where MacKinnon discovered that “Canadians were not held in high esteem for their business techniques” because it appeared that Canadian businesses had rebuffed several Central American attempts to expand trade.<sup>210</sup> As a result, the only Central American nation to sign a trade agreement with Canada was Nicaragua.<sup>211</sup>

Louis St. Laurent’s Trade Minister C. D. Howe led the next Canadian trade mission to Latin American in 1953. Unlike the MacKinnon mission, this time the focus was more informal and the purpose was to create contacts between business leaders in the various countries.<sup>212</sup> Howe was one of the most powerful and influential ministers in

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<sup>205</sup> Wilgress, 117.

<sup>206</sup> “Order in Council” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-1941 Part II (ed.) David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1976), 1033.

<sup>207</sup> See various “Order in Councils” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-1941 Part II (ed.) David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1976), 1033, 1035, 1037, 1045, 1085, 1105.

<sup>208</sup> Ogelsby, 24.

<sup>209</sup> Ogelsby, 24-25.

<sup>210</sup> Ogelsby, 24.

<sup>211</sup> M. T. Stewart, “Trade Commissioner in Columbia to Director, Trade Commissioner Service, Department of Trade” “Order in Council” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 2003.

<sup>212</sup> F. L. Marshall, “Comments by President, Canadian Inter-American Association”, Order in Council” in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1953 (ed.) Donald Barry (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1991).

both the King and St. Laurent governments. Known as the Minister “who gets things done” he was serving as Acting Prime Minister when he left on the mission.<sup>213</sup> The mission included such Canadian business dignitaries as K. F. Wadsworth, President and General Manager of Maple Leaf Milling and Clive B. Davidson, Secretary of the Canadian Wheat Board.<sup>214</sup> It traveled to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Trinidad, Venezuela, Columbia, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Cuba and Mexico.<sup>215</sup> Howe considered it to be a major success and there was a general feeling that it had succeeded in generating no small amount of “goodwill”, though once again, little in the way of new trade.<sup>216</sup>

The use of high level missions to promote goodwill, diplomatic relations and economic ties continued under Diefenbaker. The primary vehicle for the missions switched from the Department of Trade and Commerce to the Department of External Affairs but the underlying intentions remained largely the same. Sidney Smith and Howard Green would become the first two Ministers of External Affairs to travel to Latin America, as MacKinnon and Howe had been the first two Ministers of Trade and Commerce to do so, and Diefenbaker would become the first Prime Minister to visit Latin America when he traveled to Mexico in 1960.

The desire to expand Canada’s economic relationship with Latin America was a source of continuity that linked the Liberal and Conservative administrations. The lack of success in both cases was another. Despite these efforts, Latin America remained a

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<sup>213</sup> Leslie Roberts, *C. D. Howe: The Life and Times of Clarence Decatur Howe* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Company, 1957) 3-5.

<sup>214</sup> F. L. Marshall, “Comments by President, Canadian Inter-American Association”, Order in Council” in *Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1953* (ed.) Donald Barry (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1991).

<sup>215</sup> Ogelsby, 27.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.



relatively small market for Canada and never realized the potential that so many diplomats and leaders saw in it.

The post-war governments' policies were shaped by the geo-political context of the Second World War and the Cold War. They were influenced by US and Latin American pressures, by a lack of domestic interest in Canada, and by the desire to expand economically into the region. They resulted in expanded diplomatic representation and trade missions. The Liberal governments' initiatives also set in place the groundwork for Diefenbaker's policies. Yet the Diefenbaker government, shaped and influenced by the same issues and actors, at times responded to the pressures in very different ways. Diefenbaker's Latin American policies had his indelible stamp on them.

### CHAPTER 3 DIEFENBAKER AND THE FEDERATION OF THE WEST INDIES

Diefenbaker's policy towards the West Indies reflected his desire to create more autonomy for Canada in foreign affairs; much like other aspects of his government's Latin American initiatives, it was implemented largely through the personal relationships that he developed with its political leaders. His fondness for the Commonwealth, strong nationalism, belief in equality, and desire to assist the less fortunate were at the root of many of his initiatives and policies towards the islands. It was not that those policies differed substantially from Liberal policies; indeed, he built on previous policies and initiatives in pursuing his own agenda.

In 1958, the various islands that formed the British West Indies took their first tentative steps towards independence from Britain and formed the West Indies Federation. The new Federation sought to establish itself in the Western Hemisphere and found an ally in the newly elected Canadian Prime Minister, John G. Diefenbaker. Diefenbaker would work to expand Canada's political and economic involvement with the new Federation through policy initiatives in aid, immigration and trade.

When Diefenbaker looked at the new Federation, he saw not only increased trading opportunities for Canada but also a fledgling member of the Commonwealth that was seeking assistance. Developing a relationship with the Federation appealed to his anglophile nature and also his deep-rooted desire to better the lives of the less fortunate. Furthermore, with British influence in the region waning, he saw an opportunity for Canada to make a larger impact in the region.

Canadian connections with the West Indies were already well established, thus giving Diefenbaker a strong base upon which to build. Since the mid-nineteenth century

Canada had enjoyed a semblance of an economic and a defense relationship with the islands. The Maritimes had traded salt fish, lumber, flour and manufactured goods with the West Indies in exchange for sugar, molasses, rum and spices.<sup>217</sup> At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Canadian capital institutions, markedly the Royal Bank and the Bank of Nova Scotia, began to open up branches in the region and proceeded to establish a strong presence there. By 1959 the Royal Bank alone had 75 branches in the Caribbean.<sup>218</sup> Canada and the West Indies had both also been engaged in the defense of the British Empire, most notably during both World Wars when Canada had sent troops to the Commonwealth Caribbean to assist in garrison duty there.<sup>219</sup>

The various islands that formed the British West Indies had been slow to grow in the early years. A period of depression in the 1930s led to general anger at the colonial authorities who responded with a concentrated effort to increase the economies of the islands. This was somewhat successful in the post-war years but the economic successes combined with a desire for self-governance led the British to consider what form a post-colonial West Indies government should take.<sup>220</sup> They determined that the islands, too small to form their own government, should be combined to create a viable federation.<sup>221</sup>

In 1958 the Federation of the West Indies was born. It was a shaky arrangement as the smaller islands (Antigua, Dominica, etc.) feared that they would be dominated by the larger islands (Jamaica and Trinidad), which in turn were already thinking about the possibility of achieving their own independence. The leaders who supported the new

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<sup>217</sup> D. G. L. Fraser, "Canada's Role in the West Indies" in Behind the Headlines (January, 1964), 5.

<sup>218</sup> Robin W. Winks, Canadian-West Indian Union: A Forty Year Minuet (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 21.

<sup>219</sup> David Murray, "Garrisoning the Caribbean: A Chapter in Canadian Military History" in Canada and the Commonwealth Caribbean, (ed.) Brian Douglas Tennyson (United States: University Press of America, 1988), 285-287.

<sup>220</sup> D.A.G. Waddell, The West Indies and the Guianas (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 109-130.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

federation, such as its first Prime Minister, Sir Grantley Adams, knew they needed external support in order to make it work. One source of support was Canada.

These developments occurred roughly at the same time that the new Conservative government in Canada, led by John G. Diefenbaker, began to work on shifting Canada's foreign policy priorities. The Federation created a new dynamic between Canada and the West Indies that appealed to Diefenbaker. The Federation was independent and this created space in which Canada could increase its influence; it would be easier than dealing with each island on an individual basis. The Federation was also a member of the Commonwealth, the international organization to which Diefenbaker felt a strong personal connection. Finally, the Federation sought to counter the growing US influence in the region, and its leaders could thus see the advantage of drawing Canada into a closer relationship. For Diefenbaker, whose new government was also seeking greater autonomy from the US, the goals of the two federations dovetailed nicely.

A highly influential factor in bringing Canada and the West Indies together was the personal relationship that developed between Adams and Diefenbaker. Even before he assumed his new post as Prime Minister, Adams made known his desire to strengthen ties with Canada. In 1957, while still Prime Minister of Barbados, he had delivered a speech at Mount Alison University in New Brunswick where he outlined the importance of Canada to the Federation.

We have commercial ties with the United States, and we are not likely to be anti-American especially if we are appealing for American investment. But we are profoundly convinced that our whole future depends on the closest possible relationship with the Dominion of Canada. We have already passed appropriate resolutions at some of our federal meetings, and we intend in a

short time to send delegations up to Ottawa. We are already determined to explore the possibilities for increased trade and for increased immigration.<sup>222</sup>

Shortly following the establishment of the Federation, between 1958 and 1959, Adams began to exchange correspondence with Diefenbaker. He inquired as to the nature of the Canadian federation, expressed his admiration for its successes, and expressed his desire to reproduce the Canadian model in the islands of the Lesser Antilles.<sup>223</sup> Diefenbaker was both flattered and intrigued. He supported the creation of the Federation at the meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1957 and offered to extend diplomatic recognition when it achieved independence. Upon its official declaration of independence he expedited the appointment of a Canadian Ambassador (Robert Guy Carrington Smith) to the Federation, as a sign of the importance that he attached to it.<sup>224</sup> At the time neither Haiti nor the Dominican Republic had their own Canadian representative, both being under the purview of the Canadian Ambassador to Cuba.

Adams visited Canada twice in successive years. In 1958 he requested a meeting with Diefenbaker and he visited Ottawa and had lunch with the Prime Minister.<sup>225</sup> The next year he was invited to deliver the Henry Marshall Tory Lecture at the University of Alberta. When Diefenbaker learned that Adams would be in Canada, he invited him to Ottawa. On October 23rd, 1959, nearly a year after his first visit, Diefenbaker and

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<sup>222</sup> Sir Grantley Adams, "West Indian Experiences and Hopes" in P. A. Lockwood (ed.) Canada and the West Indies: Speeches by Sir Grantley Adams, Professor Alexander Brady and Others (Sackville, New Brunswick: Mount Allison University Publication, 1958), 36.

<sup>223</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 550 (P.M.O. Series), File# 827, #003779.

<sup>224</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 555 (P.M.O. Series), File# 840, #421623.

<sup>225</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 542 (P.M.O. Series), File# 818.1 WIF, 412783-6.

Adams met for lunch again.<sup>226</sup> During both meetings the two leaders discussed trade, politics and the strengthening of relations between the two federations.

Adams saw many similarities between Canada and the West Indies Federation. Both were artificial creations that incorporated different peoples, some with different laws (St. Kitts still used the Napoleonic Code.)<sup>227</sup> Additionally, both had a federal system of government, the various islands maintaining their respective legislatures and the proper authority to pass laws.<sup>228</sup> It was not an accidental but rather a deliberate attempt to copy the Canadian system, which many West Indian politicians, including Adams, viewed as very successful.<sup>229</sup>

Diefenbaker also saw the similarities between Canada and the West Indies Federation — towards which he took a somewhat paternalistic approach. He saw Canada's role as helping to guide the new Federation in its encounter with the new challenges of statehood. Diefenbaker often spoke about Canada's "responsibility to the world," and he believed that this responsibility extended, in particular, to helping new international entities such as the British West Indies establish themselves in the international system. In the Federation he thought Canada should be taking a "particular interest."<sup>230</sup>

Diefenbaker often attempted to personally assist Adams and the Federation. For example, he was approached by Adams prior to the 1961 Commonwealth Conference in London and asked if he would represent the Federation's view on various subjects that

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<sup>226</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 542 (P.M.O. Series), File# 818.1 WIF, p. 412771-3.

<sup>227</sup> Adams, "West Indian Experiences and Hopes," 31.

<sup>228</sup> Jan Rogoziński, A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and the Carib to the Present (New York: Facts on File Inc., 1992), 262.

<sup>229</sup> Adams, "West Indian Experiences and Hopes," 33.

<sup>230</sup> Diefenbaker, 145-6 and 194.

were to be on the conference agenda.”<sup>231</sup> Diefenbaker agreed to do so. Likewise, in the waning days of the Federation, as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago began to agitate for separation, Adams turned to Diefenbaker and asked for help.<sup>232</sup> Specifically, he asked him to tour the various islands and promote the idea of the Federation.<sup>233</sup> Unfortunately, at this time, in 1962, Diefenbaker was under political siege at home, barely hanging onto power at the head of a precarious minority government. Reluctantly he declined Adams’ request, because, as he explained, his schedule was “so pressing that it did not seem possible to get away from Ottawa for the time required.”<sup>234</sup>

In his memoirs Diefenbaker would warmly remember his “close friend, Sir Grantley Adams” whom he “admired greatly.”<sup>235</sup> He also recorded his fondness for “the island states that were formerly part of the British West Indies” and for the dream of “a great federation of the British islands from Jamaica to Trinidad and Tobago.”<sup>236</sup> He expressed his regret at the Federation’s eventual collapse.<sup>237</sup>

In some ways, Adams’ administration and the Diefenbaker government were similar. Both were born amidst high hopes and expectations, yet neither would last a decade. In the end, neither fulfilled the promise of their beginnings and both were overtaken by events over which they had limited control. Still, during their time as leaders, Diefenbaker and Adams shared a similar international vision and desire to increase the autonomy of their federations. Both men were supporters of the Commonwealth and both sought to diversify their nation’s economic relations beyond the

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<sup>231</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 337 (P.M.O. Series), File# 380 WIF, p. 268763.

<sup>232</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker Volume II The Years of Achievement 1957-1962 (Toronto: MacMillian Company, 1976), 194 .

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

great powers. They were also wary of the influence and strength of the US, though as they each stated on different occasions, they were not anti-American.

The strengthening of the political and bureaucratic ties between Canada and the West Indies was driven personally by Diefenbaker and began in 1958. In the previous year, Diefenbaker had just emerged as the surprising victor in the Canadian national election and had a number of major foreign policy decisions to make, including deciding whether or not Canada should join NORAD and preparing for his first Commonwealth Conference. His first policy decision with regard to the Federation of the West Indies, of relatively minor importance, yet demonstrative of his desire to increase Canada's presence there, was the appointment of Robert Guy Carrington Smith as the Canadian Commissioner to the Federation. At the time of his appointment Smith was the Commercial Minister to the Canadian Embassy in Washington and a Liberal appointee. He had, however, spent over thirty years in the federal public service and was an experienced diplomat. The experience that Smith brought to a post that really mattered to Diefenbaker outweighed any doubts that he might otherwise have had about appointing an individual who had connections with the Liberal Party.

Much has been written about the apparent flaw in Diefenbaker's character reflected in his deep suspicion of bureaucrats in places like the Department of External Affairs. The appointment of Robert Smith as Canadian Commissioner to the Federation, who was recommended by the Department, is an example of the opposite characteristic: Diefenbaker's willingness to rely upon the public service to further his vision of Canada's national interest. Whatever feelings he had towards the Department of External Affairs he realized instinctively that quality appointments to government posts were



important to the furtherance of his government's agenda. It was undoubtedly for this reason that there was very little turn-over of officials in the Department of External Affairs under his leadership.<sup>238</sup>

There were pragmatic reasons why Diefenbaker neither disturbed the make-up of the Department nor necessarily rejected the policy advice that was coming from its senior officials. In the first place, he was trying to come to grips with his new position as Prime Minister of Canada. He was, in a manner of speaking, thrown into the deep end of the pool when he won the 1957 election. While he had few positive feelings about the policies of the Liberal government that he replaced, he had little time to prepare an alternative policy agenda. His stint as Leader of the Opposition had been too short for that. As a consequence, he decided to continue with the existing policies unless or until they contradicted his idea of Canada's national interest. Secondly, a number of the Liberal policies were in fact compatible with Diefenbaker's vision for Canada — for a key goal for the Liberals in foreign policy had been to improve Canada's international position. What Diefenbaker did was focus on particular policy matters in Canada's external relationships that he thought would further the national interest. In Canada-West Indies relations, these areas were immigration, trade and aid.

When Diefenbaker became Prime Minister in 1957, immigration was an area of historic friction between Canada and the West Indies. Successive Canadian governments had kept immigration from the West Indies to Canada low for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1943, during the Second World War, the Department of

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<sup>238</sup> See John Hilliker's "The Politicians and the 'Personalities': The Diefenbaker Government and the Conduct of Canadian External Relations" *Canadian Historical Papers* 1984, 151 – 167 and John Hilliker and Donald Barry, *Canada's Department of External Affairs Volume 2: Coming of Age, 1946 – 1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 133 – 149.

Labour pressed Mackenzie King to allow increased immigration to offset labour shortages in Canada caused by the war.<sup>239</sup> King decided against it because of the “social and demographic considerations” that would accompany an increase in “coloured immigration.”<sup>240</sup>

An order in council in 1949 which limited the admission into Canada of “coloured people” to close relatives of Canadian citizens and special cases of merit had the effect of dividing immigration from the West Indies along racial lines.<sup>241</sup> While white West Indians could apply for immigration, coloured West Indians could not. When this division was brought before the cabinet of King’s successor, Louis St. Laurent in 1951, ministers argued that the only alternative was to set up a quota system. But because such a system would be politically damaging if its existence came to light, a decision was made to maintain the status quo.<sup>242</sup>

In 1955, however, the St. Laurent government decided to allow a small number of domestic servants to work in Canada on a trial basis and on the condition that they return to the West Indies when they had completed their terms of services.<sup>243</sup> At the same time it reversed its previous decision and decided to implement an immigration quota for the West Indies. The new quota would become effective with the official creation of the Federation of the West Indies.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> N. A. Robertson, “Movement of West Indian Labour to Canada” Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Prime Minister, in John F. Hilliker (editor) Documents on Canadian External Relations Volume 9, 1942-43 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1980), 1061-2.

<sup>240</sup> N. A. Robertson, 1064.

<sup>241</sup> Vic Satzewich, “The Canadian State and the radicalization of Caribbean migrant farm labour, 1947-1966” Ethnic and Racial Studies 11, no. 3, (July 1988): 289.

<sup>242</sup> “Immigration from the British West Indies” Cabinet Conclusion, 1951. National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2649, 5-6.

<sup>243</sup> “Immigration; admission of domestics from Jamaica” Cabinet Conclusions, 1955. National Archives of Canada RG 2, Series, A-5-s, Vol. 2657, 15-16.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

This marked the beginning of an opening to the West Indies and Diefenbaker built on both of these initiatives, expanding the number of domestic servants allowed entry into Canada and opening up non-racial based immigration from the region. Immigration was an issue of no small importance to Diefenbaker and his government eliminated racially based immigration quotas. He disagreed strongly with the historical approach taken by the Liberals towards immigration because of its racial bias. However, he was pragmatic enough to recognize the pitfalls of opening up borders to all who wanted to come to Canada. Immigration would still need to be limited but it must not be limited by race. It could, in his view, be justifiably limited by class.

Diefenbaker personally opposed racism, both domestically and in Canada's foreign affairs. For example, he appointed Canada's first Aboriginal Senator and he led the opposition to apartheid in South Africa that resulted in that country's withdrawal from the Commonwealth. In 1959, a reporter's question concerning Canada's racist immigration policy towards Guyana brought the issue of the West Indies before Diefenbaker. He informed cabinet that the policy for Guyana and the West Indies needed to be consistent with the policies for all other Commonwealth nations.<sup>245</sup>

Diefenbaker inquired privately at a Commonwealth Conference in London as to the feelings of the non-white member states towards Canada's immigration policy, making it clear that Canada was determined to remove racial bias as a factor in immigration. The various leaders responded that they would tolerate limits on immigration as long they were justified on the grounds that new immigrants could not be readily assimilated into the Canadian economy and were not based on colour.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1893, 3.

<sup>246</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1893, 3.

The racial restrictions were removed in January 1962 and replaced by a test designed to measure “education, training, skills or other special qualifications.”<sup>247</sup> The result was an immediate increase of immigration from the West Indies to Canada; the number of immigrants went from 710 in 1952 to 1480 in 1963 and then 2227 in 1963.<sup>248</sup>

Diefenbaker also increased the number of West Indian domestic workers allowed into Canada. In 1957, the Department of Immigration requested the admission of 200 domestic servants from the West Indies, an increase (albeit a small one) over the previous Liberal program which allowed 100. After some deliberation the cabinet concluded that, “In view of the previous agreements with the British West Indies, their trade relations with Canada and their new impending status in the Commonwealth, it would be most unfortunate if these proposals were refused.”<sup>249</sup> The following year the government increased the number from 200 to 250.<sup>250</sup>

Emigration was also a major issue for the government of the Federation of the West Indies, which saw it as a potential solution to the issue of over-population.<sup>251</sup> Though Diefenbaker did liberalize Canada’s immigration policies, some West Indian politicians were dissatisfied. Drawing attention to the 18,000 plus West Indians who were admitted to Britain,<sup>252</sup> and the large number of Southern European immigrants being allowed entry into Canada, they questioned Canada’s commitment to non-racial immigration policies.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Locksley G. E. Edmondson, “Canada and the West Indies: Trends and Prospects” International Journal 19, no. 2, (1964): 196-7.

<sup>248</sup> Edmondson, 197.

<sup>249</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1893, 12.

<sup>250</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2745, 11-12.

<sup>251</sup> D. G. L. Fraiser, 18 – 19.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>253</sup> Errol Barrow, “A Role for Canada in the West Indies” International Journal 19, no. 2, (1964): 184.

The reality was that despite Diefenbaker's progressive views of race and the positive changes brought about by the Conservative government, race as a category was still considered acceptable by many Canadians. Though the Conservatives might eliminate race officially from the screening process for new immigrants, Canadians in the 1960s still felt more comfortable with white immigrants who spoke a different language and brought with them a different culture than black immigrants who spoke English and were raised in a Commonwealth country. Writing a year after Diefenbaker's defeat in 1963, Canadian political scientist Duncan Fraser supported his government's immigration policies, stating that:

The problems involved in a massive West Indian immigration into Canada are great. The economic problem is of minor consequence; the social problem is a major one. So far as Canada is concerned the admission of large numbers of West Indians as immigrants would create grave hardships for the immigrants involved and would create social problems that would challenge the abilities and conscience of Canada.<sup>254</sup>

In terms of immigration, Diefenbaker could not go too far in opening the doors to Canada for West Indians.

Diefenbaker also took a personal interest in assisting the Federation by increasing the amount of aid that Canada sent to the West Indies. This was another case of a Liberal policy which Diefenbaker continued because it supported his foreign policy objectives. In 1956, the Liberals had proposed a major Canadian aid package to the West Indies. With the creation of the West Indies Federation imminent, the British had sought aid from various Commonwealth countries for the new federation. Canada agreed to provide a lump sum amount of aid, including the construction of one or two steamships and

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<sup>254</sup> Fraser, 18 – 19.

technical assistance.<sup>255</sup> It was a generous package, which the Liberals expected to implement once they had taken care of the troublesome annoyance of a national election. But the Liberals were thrown out of office before they had an opportunity to move this initiative to completion.

On January 22nd, 1958, the Progressive Conservative Cabinet discussed a request from the West Indies for technical assistance. It decided to approve \$150,000 to “finance the provision of technical assistance to the West Indies.”<sup>256</sup> More substantial aid was on the way and the next day, Diefenbaker informed the House of Commons that, “in the very near future an announcement would be made indicating what steps this government [was proposing] to take to give immediate evidence of Canada’s willingness to help this new country, through such forms of assistance as may be appropriate.”<sup>257</sup> Sidney Smith made the announcement in the House on January 30th, adding that this was only a preliminary measure and that a more comprehensive aid package was forthcoming.<sup>258</sup>

The more substantial aid package had already been prepared by the Department of External Affairs and, after consultation with officials from the West Indies, it was determined that the plan was still viable; the best form Canadian aid could take, it was decided, was assistance in the development of inter-island shipping.<sup>259</sup> The cabinet agreed and decided that a ship built in Canada and donated to the West Indies would best serve this purpose. A short while later the construction of a second ship was authorized. It was at this point that the government decided to increase the amount of funding and set

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<sup>255</sup> Jules Léger, “Assistance to the Federation of the West Indies” Memorandum from Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs to Secretary of State for External Affairs” in Greg Donaghy (Editor) Documents on Canadian External Relations Volume 22, 1956 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 2001).

<sup>256</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1898, 11.

<sup>257</sup> House of Common Debates, 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, Vol. IV, p. 3665-6.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 4015-6.

<sup>259</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 7 (Personal and Confidential) File# 175, 004060-1.

the amount of \$10,000,000 spread over the course of the next five years, as the total for the aid package.<sup>260</sup>

The decision to build the ships met with very little criticism in the House of Commons or in the media. The Liberals, of course, could hardly criticize what was, in essence, an expanded version of their own policy. The decision on where to build them, however, was not as well received. The government decided to accept a bid from Port Weller Dry Dock and Vickers Ltd, a firm based out of Montreal.<sup>261</sup> This led to accusations of the government favouring Eastern shipping interests over Western. The government defended itself by stating that it had simply gone with the lower bid.<sup>262</sup>

Though the construction of the two ships, the *Federal Palm* and the *Federal Maple*, used most of the \$10,000,000 aid package, between 1957 and 1963, the Diefenbaker government provided other forms of assistance to the West Indies.<sup>263</sup> It provided \$1,000,000 towards the construction of a deep water wharf and warehouse on the island of St. Vincent,<sup>264</sup> purchased port handling equipment, and helped finance a residence for the Faculty of Engineering of the University College of the West Indies, as well as supporting approximately 30 Canadian experts, teachers, and advisors on the islands.<sup>265</sup>

On the Island of Dominica, the Diefenbaker government assisted in opening two schools and provided important advice concerning the exploitation of the island's forest resources. Canadian experts demonstrated that the Gommier trees, which were plentiful

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<sup>260</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1898, 4-5.

<sup>261</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 337 (P.M.O. Series) File# 380 W.I.F., 402989.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., 402990.

<sup>263</sup> Trevor Lloyd, *Canada in World Affairs, 1957-1959* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968) 193-194.

<sup>264</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2747, 3.

<sup>265</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, p.12-13. Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 533 (P.M.O. Series) File# 802 WIF, 406783.

on the island but were not used by the forestry industry, could be used in the creation of plywood.<sup>266</sup> Finally the government provided \$50,000 for a survey of the island's natural resources.<sup>267</sup>

Diefenbaker often framed foreign aid in terms of duty or rather helping the less fortunate in the world. On such matters he was nothing short of passionate, believing strongly that the wealthy countries of the west had a responsibility to support the poorer ones. In his memoirs he wrote that his father had taught him that "each of us was our brother's keeper."<sup>268</sup> He also thought of foreign aid, thanks to his prairie background, in agricultural terms. In his memoirs he related how he followed his father's advice by advocating a World Food Bank to store surplus food so that it could be distributed in the event of famine. On a more pragmatic note, he also saw the distribution of aid as an opportunity to further Canada's domestic agricultural base.<sup>269</sup>

However, Canadian aid to the West Indies was not a matter of providing agricultural relief; rather, it was based on firm economic realities. Diefenbaker believed that Canada had a natural interest in helping the West Indies to build a robust economy. It was exporting over \$40 million a year to the islands but more importantly than that, the West Indies (along with British Guyana) were also the main source of bauxite for the Canadian aluminum industry.<sup>270</sup> The Canadian Company ALCAN had already invested over \$100 million in the area.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 40 (Personal and Confidential Series), File# 324, 027820.

<sup>267</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, 13.

<sup>268</sup> Diefenbaker, 140.

<sup>269</sup> Robinson, 5.

<sup>270</sup> Howard Green, "Aid Program for Former British Territories in the Caribbean" Memorandum to the Cabinet. National Archives of Canada, RG 25, Vol. 5595, File # 12882-W-1-40, Part 1, 2.

<sup>271</sup> Green, 2.



ALCAN was one of two major Canadian corporations that had strong economic connections to Latin America. The other was Brazilian Traction, which had greater influence on Diefenbaker when it came to shaping Canadian policies towards the West Indies. The difference was the lack of a personal connection, as Brazilian Traction's President, Henry Border, was a friend of Diefenbaker — who already had a reliable source of information on the West Indies in Adams.

Further aid plans were considered by the Diefenbaker government, again on a bilateral basis. Its recommendations called for a “Colombo style” plan, based on the very successful Commonwealth aid program established at Colombo in 1950, which would have the advantage of getting other Commonwealth nations involved. The understanding was that the US would not be invited to participate until other Commonwealth countries had been approached and been given the opportunity to approve the plan.<sup>272</sup> The plan survived the fall of the Diefenbaker government in 1963 and Pearson continued with the various plans to increase aid to the West Indies.<sup>273</sup>

An example of how Diefenbaker's personal interest in policy matters could create complications for his government is found in its decision in 1957 to reverse the Liberal policy of subsidizing the Canadian National Steamships company, the primary carrier of sea-borne trade between Canada and the West Indies. Previously, in 1956 the Liberals had decided to address a potential problem for Canadian-West Indian trade when they decided to allow Canadian National Steamships Limited to continue to exist. The steamship service had been introduced in 1929 but in recent years had begun to run up a

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<sup>272</sup> Green, 2.

<sup>273</sup> Fraser, 17.

large yearly deficit.<sup>274</sup> The St. Laurent government decided that in spite of the deficit (estimated to be at \$200,000 a year) the company should run for another five years, after which its future would be reviewed. One of the reasons for this decision was the importance of the company and its service to Canadian-West Indian trade.<sup>275</sup>

The future of the company, however, would soon be clouded by a major strike, which prompted the new Diefenbaker government to sell it off. This decision sparked a heated debate in the House of Commons.<sup>276</sup> Considering that the company's eight ships formed a considerable part of Canada's deep-sea fleet, its sale seemed to contradict the Diefenbaker government's attempts to expand Canadian trade to the Islands.<sup>277</sup>

The main factor in the Government's decision, it turned out, was the state of unionism at the company and a personal antagonism between Diefenbaker and the leader of the Canadian chapter of the Seafarers' International Union, Hal Banks. Banks had amassed enormous power in the union, and had put together a blacklist (called the "do not ship list") having the effect of preventing certain workers from finding employment on Canadian cargo vessels.<sup>278</sup> When the Conservative cabinet met to discuss the union problem at the company it agreed that, "it was an intolerable situation that employment on government owned ships should be decided by Banks" and "steps must be taken to

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<sup>274</sup> G. C. Marler, "Canadian National (West Indies) Steamships Limited" Memorandum from Minister of Transport to Cabinet in Greg Donaghy (ed.) Documents on Canadian External Relations Volume 22, 1956 (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 2001).

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Trevor Lloyd, Canada in World Affairs: 1957-1959, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 192. House of Common Debates, 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, Volume IV, May 21<sup>st</sup>, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, June 4<sup>th</sup>, PAGE#

<sup>277</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1892, 16.

<sup>278</sup> William Kaplan, Everything That Floats: Pat Sullivan, Hal Banks, and the Seaman's Union of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 79-80.

break the man's hold."<sup>279</sup> Michael Starr, the Minister of Labour, was particularly "appalled" by the "do not ship list" and sought ways to expose it and make it illegal.<sup>280</sup>

Diefenbaker had little love for Banks. During his years as Leader of the Opposition he had pressed hard to have him brought to justice for various crimes he allegedly committed in Canada.<sup>281</sup> In 1957, as the crisis over the Canadian National Steamships company reached its peak, Diefenbaker obtained Banks' criminal record. Though it is unclear if it was sent to him or if he ordered it, the Pinkerton National Detective Agency had secured it from the Los Angeles Police Department and delivered it to the Canadian government.<sup>282</sup>

The criminal record confirmed what Diefenbaker had suspected about Banks, that he was a convicted felon. It listed assault with a deadly weapon, kidnapping and murder as charges that had been laid against him, although he had been found not guilty of the murder charge and pleaded no dispute to the kidnapping charge. The record contained two newspaper articles concerning the murder that were particularly damning to Banks, both implying his guilt.

These accusations did little to endear Banks to Diefenbaker. But his criminal record was not the only problem.<sup>283</sup> Banks was also a Liberal fund raiser and had been allowed into the country thanks to a special order-in-council signed by the St. Laurent cabinet in 1954 after the Ministry of Immigration had recommended that he be deported

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<sup>279</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1893, 17.

<sup>280</sup> Kaplan, 102.

<sup>281</sup> Kaplan, 157-8.

<sup>282</sup> Diefenbaker Archives, Vol. 304 (Reference Series) File# 25.1 Banks, 194628-30.

<sup>283</sup> Much of Bank's life in Canada has, in fact, hit both the small and the silver screens. The National Film Board produced a docudrama called *Canada's Sweetheart: The Sage of Hal C. Banks* and documentary film maker Elaine Brière directed *Betrayed: The Story of Canadian Merchant Seamen*.

because of his aforementioned troubles.<sup>284</sup> In his memoirs Diefenbaker would claim that Banks was Liberal “election muscle” and that all of the Conservative government’s attempts to deport him were “frustrated by developments, legislative and otherwise, initiated during the previous administration.”<sup>285</sup>

Despite Diefenbaker’s feelings towards Banks, however, the decision was made to offer Banks and the union one last chance to accept the company offer of a 15 cent raise; Banks wanted 30 cents. If Banks and the union did not accept, then the government would permit the company to change the registry to another country, allowing it to hire a new work force.<sup>286</sup> The union was told of the consequences but it refused to settle and the strike continued. The company switched the registry on the ships but it found that the longshoremen refused to unload the ships.<sup>287</sup> Thus the strike continued and the ships were rendered idle.

The decline in shipping trade caused by the strike was quickly reversed, however, when a number of other Canadian companies took on the contracts. Meanwhile, the ships were still costing the company approximately \$145,000 per month while they lay at anchor and the Canadian government decided that it could sell them.<sup>288</sup> The company entertained a number of offers, which needed final approval from the government before they could be finalized.<sup>289</sup> In an interesting turn of events, an offer from the Cuban

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<sup>284</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker The Tumultuous Years, 1962 – 1967 (Toronto: MacMillian Company, 1977), 217.

<sup>285</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker The Tumultuous Years, 1962 – 1967, 217.

<sup>286</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1893, 9.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>288</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1898, 3.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

government of Fulgencio Batista was the front runner and the cabinet approved the sale of eight Canadian ships to the Banco Cubano for the sum of \$2,800,000.<sup>290</sup>

After the sale, Diefenbaker's government continued to answer questions concerning it. The timing of the sale proved particularly problematic because only a few months later the Batista regime fell to Fidel Castro's July 26<sup>th</sup> Movement. The Diefenbaker government's decision had thus unintentionally provided communist Cuba with a deep sea fleet. The Liberal Opposition seized upon this and repeatedly expressed its outrage in the House of Commons.<sup>291</sup>

Diefenbaker's actions in the Banks Affair typified the approach that he often took on policy issues where he had strong personal feelings towards the individuals involved. Fortunately in the end, the decision to allow the sale of the ships did not adversely affect the levels of trade between Canada and the islands. In fact, trade between Canada and the Federation of the West Indies during the Diefenbaker era increased steadily. This occurred, however, with little direct assistance from the Canadian government.<sup>292</sup> The Federation and its component islands were eager for Canadian investment. Jamaica was a particular example as in the years following the Second World War it had focused on industrializing and passed a number of incentive laws to encourage foreign investment. Private Canadian companies, most notably ALCAN, invested over \$125 million in Jamaica alone. In addition, dozens of factories were built in Jamaica using Canadian capital.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> National Archives of Canada, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1899, 7.

<sup>291</sup> See House of Common Debates, 23<sup>rd</sup> Parliament, 3698-99; 24<sup>th</sup> Parliament, 459, 1129, 2301.

<sup>292</sup> Mitchell Sharp, "Canada and the West Indies" The Monetary Times, (July 1963), 27.

<sup>293</sup> Fraser, 12-13.

A trade agreement signed back in 1925 had established policies of preferential treatment between Canada and the islands of the West Indies. Based on an earlier bilateral trade agreement signed in 1912, the agreement of 1925 remained in force through the Diefenbaker era and granted preferences to a wide variety of exports both from Canada to the West Indies and vice versa.<sup>294</sup> The result of the agreement was a steady increase in trade that continued on past Diefenbaker's defeat in 1963.<sup>295</sup> Though it had taken little direct action to spur trade between Canada and the West Indies, the Diefenbaker government had sustained the connections that would continue to promote it.

Diefenbaker's policy towards the Federation of the West Indies was based on his desire to create greater autonomy for Canada by expanding into a region that did not yet have an overpowering US presence. It also reflected his personal convictions relating to a number of policy areas, including aid and development, support for a multi-racial Commonwealth, and the promotion of racial equality. Furthermore, his policy was supported and influenced by the government of the newly formed Federation of the West Indies which hoped to create a stronger relationship with Canada. It is important to note that the policy, in certain respects, continued policies or programs initiated by the previous Liberal government. Diefenbaker's contribution was to take a special interest in certain initiatives and place them within a larger formulation of the national interest pertaining to Latin America.

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<sup>294</sup> "Notes on the West Indies" Diefenbaker Archives Canada, (P.M.O. Series) Vol. 555, File 840 WIF, 421627.

<sup>295</sup> Sharp, 27.

## CHAPTER 4 DIEFENBAKER AND MEXICO

In 1959, Adolfo López Mateos, the newly elected President of Mexico, visited Canada. It was more than a courtesy call. It was his first state visit and he chose Canada over the US and other Latin American countries. It was a gesture rich in symbolism, reflecting the desire by the Mexican government to strengthen its relationship with Canada. It appealed to Diefenbaker, a man who valued personal diplomacy and also sought greater autonomy from the US in foreign policy. López 's visit marked the beginning of Diefenbaker's attempt to improve Canada's relationship with Mexico, both politically and economically. Diefenbaker would accomplish this primarily through his personal relationship with López, sending two trusted supporters, Pierre Sevigny and Howard Green, to Mexico and making personal interventions in Cabinet discussions concerning Mexico.

Prior to the visit by López in 1959, Canadian-Mexican relations had been rather limited. Early problems between Britain and Mexico over the latter's nationalization of oil production meant that Canada and Mexico did not establish diplomatic representation until 1944.<sup>296</sup> Shortly thereafter James MacKinnon included a stop in Mexico as part of the second phase of his trade mission to Latin America in 1946.<sup>297</sup> This mission led to the 1947 trade agreement that gave each nation most-favoured nation status.<sup>298</sup> MacKinnon, however, did not have the ear of Mackenzie King, who had little desire to expand Canada's role in the world in the post-Second World War geo-political climate;

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<sup>296</sup> Stephen J. Randall, "Sharing a Continent: Canadian-Mexican Relations since 1945" in Beyond Mexico (Jean Daudelin and Edgar J. Dosman eds.), 19.

<sup>297</sup> J.C.M. Ogelsby, Gringos from the Far North: Essays in the History of Canadian-Latin American Relations, 1866-1968 (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976), 17.

<sup>298</sup> G. A. Calkin, "The development of relations between Canada and Mexico" International Perspectives (1973), 55.

generally he saw Latin America as a having too many potential problems.<sup>299</sup>

Furthermore, the US remained concerned about Canadian involvement in the region and advised the Canadian government not to sell arms to Mexico when the latter asked to purchase frigates from the Royal Canadian Navy.<sup>300</sup> Thus, under King, Mexican-Canadian relations languished. The relationship remained in this state until the arrival of St. Laurent.

St. Laurent took a more progressive view of Canada's international role, and applied it to Canada's relationship with Mexico. By the time he assumed office, the 1947 trade agreement had led to an increase in Mexican-Canadian trade. In fact, by 1950, Mexican purchases from Canada had doubled and by 1955 Mexico was the largest Latin American importer of Canadian goods.<sup>301</sup> Meanwhile officials in the Department of External Affairs and the Department of Trade and Commerce wanted to increase Canadian involvement in Latin America. In 1953, when C.D. Howe proposed his own trade mission to the region, St. Laurent supported it.<sup>302</sup> Though the mission produced few tangible results, it was considered to be "particularly active and effective" by Howe,<sup>303</sup> helped engender Mexican goodwill towards Canada, and was a factor in López's 1959 visit to Canada.

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<sup>299</sup> "Memorandum from Prime Minister to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1939-1941 Part I (ed.) David R. Murray (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1974), 50.

<sup>300</sup> "Telegram, Secretary of State for External Affairs to Ambassador in United States" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1946 (ed.) Donald Page (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1992), 1972.

<sup>301</sup> Randall, 20.

<sup>302</sup> "Memorandum by Department of Trade and Commerce: Latin American Goodwill Trade Mission" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1952 (ed.) Donald Barry (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1990).

<sup>303</sup> "Goodwill Trade Mission: Comments by President, Inter-American Association" in Documents on Canadian External Relations, 1953 (ed.) Donald Barry (Ottawa: Department of External Affairs, 1991).



López's visit was the spark that ignited Diefenbaker's interest in promoting Canadian-Mexican relations. Though Diefenbaker had previously visited Mexico in 1953 for his honeymoon with second wife Olive, he had not at that time formulated any strong ideas concerning Mexico's relationship to Canada. Furthermore, during the hectic first year in office, Diefenbaker had little time to focus on developing a stronger Canadian-Mexican relationship.

In 1957 Canada's Ambassador to Mexico, Douglas Seaman Cole, attempted to alert Diefenbaker to Mexico's potential as an alternative economic market for Canadian trade. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1957, Diefenbaker gave a speech in which he stated that Canada would be seeking to substantially shift the course of its export economy.<sup>304</sup> In response to the speech, Cole sent Diefenbaker a long memo outlining the enormous possibility of Canadian-Mexican trade. Cole, the author of Mexico: An Economic Survey, had long been a proponent of expanding Canadian-Mexican trade.<sup>305</sup> He saw an opportunity to push it forward under Diefenbaker's new policy. Unfortunately, Diefenbaker had more immediate concerns, in particular another election in 1958. Following this victory, Mexico slipped further from his mind as he dealt with numerous domestic and external issues.

In 1959, Diefenbaker was in the midst of trying to get a handle on the complexities of foreign policy, but he lacked the patience or talent for the diplomatic negotiations that were such an integral component of it.<sup>306</sup> All the while he had to deal with escalating US-Soviet tensions, fallout from his decision to cancel the Avro Arrow,

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<sup>304</sup> Cole to Diefenbaker, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1957. DCCA Vol. 568 (P.M.O.), File #861, pp. 432281-7.

<sup>305</sup> Mexico City News, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1954. DCCA Vol. 568 (P.M.O.), File #861, pp. 432277.

<sup>306</sup> H. Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 103.

the death of his Secretary of State for External Affairs, Sidney Smith, and the appointment of Howard Green in his place. It was the proposed visit of López that put Canadian-Mexican relations on this rather full agenda. The visit also demonstrated the importance of personal interactions to how Diefenbaker formulated and initiated policy.

The timing was excellent. López had just won the Mexican Presidency in 1958 and was eager to demonstrate Mexico's independence from the US in international affairs.<sup>307</sup> He was noted for his youth and energy and he made an immediate personal connection with Diefenbaker. In many respects, his foreign policy concerns paralleled Diefenbaker's. For example, he refused to break off relations with Castro and communist Cuba and yet was careful to avoid direct conflict with the US over the issue.

The first meeting between the two leaders went exceptionally well, thanks to the numerous commonalities between them. López, like Diefenbaker, was a gifted orator.<sup>308</sup> Like his Canadian counterpart, he also sought to promote a more autonomous foreign policy from the US. Both López and Diefenbaker were conscious of the US colossus but were not anti-American in outlook.<sup>309</sup> López saw in Canada what Diefenbaker saw in Mexico, an ally which knew the difficulties of walking a fine line between keeping a respectful distance from the US and respecting US leadership in the west.

López visited Ottawa on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1959, stayed three days and brought his wife and daughter along with him. Though his visit did not garner much publicity in Canada, it was important in Diefenbaker's eyes.<sup>310</sup> He and López established an excellent rapport with each other. López's admiration of Canada played well to

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<sup>307</sup> Burton Kirkwood, *The History of Mexico* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 185.

<sup>308</sup> Enrique Krause, *Mexico: Biography of Power: A History of Modern Mexico*, translated by Han Heifetz, (New York, Harper Collins, 1997), 626.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*, 654-661.

<sup>310</sup> Randall, 23.

Diefenbaker's nationalistic impulses. Upon his return to Mexico, López informed Lionel V. J. Roy, the Canadian Chargé d'Affairs in Mexico, that he enjoyed his visit because "the welcome came from the heart."<sup>311</sup> To express his thanks for the treatment he received during the visit, he sent Diefenbaker, in a touch of irony given the latter's reputation for non-indulgence, a box of Mexican tequila.<sup>312</sup>

López's visit had a number of repercussions, including the resulting appointment of the new Canadian Ambassador to Mexico. In April 1958, Douglas Cole was to retire and a replacement needed to be found. Initially Diefenbaker favoured replacing Cole with J. W. Murphy, a long time Conservative and former Member of Parliament from Lambton County who had expressed an interest in the Ambassadorship as a reward for his contributions to the party.<sup>313</sup> Murphy had the additional appeal of being from outside the Department of External Affairs and therefore would not be strongly influenced by the "Personalities" there.<sup>314</sup> Loyalty and an outsider status rated exceptionally well in Diefenbaker's scale of virtues and it appeared as if he had found his man.

However, Howard Green had another man in mind. He pushed for Arthur Irwin, a seasoned diplomat, arguing that the position of Ambassador to Mexico was critical to Canada's Latin-American relations.<sup>315</sup> The disagreement between Green and Diefenbaker spilled over into cabinet, which put off the decision twice. The final

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<sup>311</sup> Letter from Lionel V. J. Roy to Diefenbaker, Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, 1959. DCCA Vol. 563 (P.M.O.), File 846, 428638.

<sup>312</sup> Letter from Diefenbaker to Adolfo López Mateos, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 553 (P.M.O.), File 840, 420757.

<sup>313</sup> Cole to Diefenbaker, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1958. DCCA Vol. 568 (P.M.O.), File #861, 432264-6.

<sup>314</sup> "Appointment – Ambassador to Mexico", Cabinet Conclusions, December 1st, 1959. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2745, 10.

<sup>315</sup> "Appointment – Ambassador to Mexico", Cabinet Conclusions, December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1959. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2745, 3.

agreement was that the appointment would “be the subject of further conversations between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the Prime Minister.”<sup>316</sup>

The decisive factor in the eventual appointment of Irwin was Diefenbaker’s acceptance of an invitation in 1960 to travel to Mexico, repaying López’s visit with one of his own. With the Prime Minister’s visit on the horizon, Green was able to make a stronger argument for a Latin American specialist, and Diefenbaker relented. That Irwin’s recommendation had come from the Department of External Affairs was less important than that Diefenbaker’s trip to Mexico be a success and thus that Canada-Mexico relations be strengthened.<sup>317</sup>

Irwin was a good choice. He had a varied and highly successful career both in and out of government. He had been assistant editor and then sole editor of Maclean’s magazine between the years 1925 and 1950. He had been High Commissioner to Australia and later Ambassador to Brazil. Most importantly, he had numerous Latin American contacts and a thorough knowledge of the region.<sup>318</sup> He also had the full confidence of Green who later appointed him as an observer to the 1960 meeting of the OAS.<sup>319</sup>

In including Mexico on his very busy itinerary for 1960, Diefenbaker was attempting to show López the high priority that the latter put on the Canada-Mexico relationship. He was a frequent traveler but it is highly unlikely that his travels would have included Mexico if not for the relationship that he formed with its president.

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 2

<sup>317</sup> See Chapter Three for more information on Smith’s appointment.

<sup>318</sup> House of Commons Debates, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 863.

<sup>319</sup> “Appointment – Ambassador to Mexico”, Cabinet Conclusion. N.A.C., R.G. 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2745, 3-4.

The visit to Mexico was to last four days, a fairly long stay, and there was a lot of groundwork to be accomplished before the Prime Minister arrived. Fortunately, Irwin arrived with enough time to ensure a proper reception for the Canadian delegation, and the mutual respect that existed between López and Diefenbaker helped to smooth over an awkward moment early in the visit. The circumstances were the occasion of Diefenbaker's speech upon his arrival in Mexico City. He was greeted by López and he answered the greetings with a short speech in English and then in Spanish. When he asked the President if he understood what he had said, López replied that while he understood English, Mexicans spoke Spanish not Portuguese.<sup>320</sup>

The valiant but ultimately futile attempt at speaking a language other than English was typical of Diefenbaker. He tried for years to master French and would continue to deliver speeches in Canada's other official language despite the protestations of his French advisors.<sup>321</sup> It was indicative of the man to believe that through perseverance and a sheer act of will that he could accomplish his goals. His policies towards Mexico and Latin America in general would be deeply influenced by this characteristic determination to succeed.

Diefenbaker saw untapped potential in Mexico, both as an international ally that shared many of the same values as Canada, and as a market for Canadian goods. In Mexico he saw a nation that struggled to come to terms with the US and one that was attempting to chart an autonomous course despite American interference. In other words, he thought that Mexico, like Canada, was trapped by the Cold War paradigm with the result that any actions that contravened US policies would be interpreted as a failure of

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<sup>320</sup> Pierre Sévigny "Diefenbaker en français" in *First Drafts: Eyewitness Accounts from Canada's Past* J. L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer (ed.) (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2002), 348-9.

<sup>321</sup> Sévigny, 348.

Western solidarity. He also saw a country that was attempting to diversify its markets from an increasing dependence on the United States, again like Canada. In both of these areas he thought Canada and Mexico were well situated to help each other. Diefenbaker's attempts to unlock this potential would be largely personal and would not involve many new policies or treaties. His actions yielded small dividends in terms of improved Canada-Mexico relations but they did draw attention to the personal interest that Diefenbaker gave to foreign policy questions that were important to him.

Still, Diefenbaker's visit to Mexico was somewhat of a success in terms of improving Canadian-Mexican relations. In a number of speeches both Diefenbaker and López commented on the strong personal relationship that they had developed and their desire to strengthen Canadian-Mexican relations overall. Interestingly, they also emphasized that both countries had a number of important commonalities such as the free institutions and traditions of democracy.<sup>322</sup>

The truth was that this was a strained comparison at best. Mexico under the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) was essentially a one-party state which had a strong corporatist economy, as opposed to Canada's multi-party system and free market capitalist economy. Furthermore, Canada had no equivalent to the Mexican Revolution (the Rebellions of 1837-38 could not be seriously considered in this category) and retained the British monarchy as a respected feature of government where Mexico had made a complete break with the Spanish crown.

Diefenbaker really had little knowledge of Mexican history and likely only scanned the briefing reports before his arrival. For him the historical nuances were not as

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<sup>322</sup> Text of Speeches by Diefenbaker and López, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 258 (P.M.O.), File #313.45, 210650-1.

important as the contemporary opportunities and they could be exploited by two men who were empowered to make decisions and had reached an understanding between themselves. Thus he would emphasize the similarities, as would López.

Later, at a dinner given in his honour, Diefenbaker again emphasized the similarities between the two federations but this time in a contemporary context where the comparison was more accurate and appropriate. He expressed the view that current geo-political realities, specifically the power of the United States and the threat of the Soviet Union, were pushing Canada and Mexico closer together.<sup>323</sup> The realities of the bi-polar world were limiting the ability of both Canada and Mexico to pursue policies that were in their respective national interests, a situation that Diefenbaker felt was unacceptable.

While he was in Mexico, Diefenbaker also gave a speech to a joint meeting of the Mexican College of Law and the Mexican Bar Association, where he further elaborated on the differences between the US and Canada and the similarities between Canada and Mexico. In the speech he discussed the concept of international law and the fact that both Canada and Mexico accepted and supported its expansion. He also pointed out that the US was one of those countries that did not support an International Court because of concerns that the Court would interfere with American domestic affairs. Diefenbaker then stated that, “the difference, however, between our two countries [Canada and the United States] is this. We leave it to the Court to determine whether or not it is a matter of

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<sup>323</sup> Text of Speech given by Diefenbaker in Mexico City, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 258 (P.M.O.), File # 313.45, 210665-7.

domestic jurisdiction. The United States determines the question itself and does not leave it to the court.”<sup>324</sup>

It was perhaps his greatest criticism of both the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that neither properly respected the rule of law. For countries caught in their respective orbits, like Canada and Mexico, the rule of law was of primary importance. On a personal level, the rule of law and its ability to protect those who do not have access to power and prestige was something that Diefenbaker held dear. The corollary of this was the desirability of using international institutions to interpret that law. Though he was not fond of the UN, the organization where his Liberal nemesis Pearson had achieved so much acclaim, he nevertheless thought it had a place of importance in solving international disputes. For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, he believed that mediation by the UN could potentially defuse the situation. It was Washington’s willingness to by-pass the UN whenever it suited its interests that particularly irked him.

During his trip to Mexico Diefenbaker also took the opportunity to visit the University of Mexico where he once again reiterated his belief that Canada and Mexico, while having different histories, were now traveling down the same geo-political road.<sup>325</sup> It was a message that played well to a nation that had long been the victim of US aggression. During the same speech he also praised universities in general and offered a gift of books dealing with Canadian history and geography as well as a number of

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<sup>324</sup> Text of Speech delivered to a joint meeting of the Mexican College of Law and the Mexican Bar Association, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 125 (XI), File #687, 5-6.

<sup>325</sup> Text of Speech delivered at the University of Mexico, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 258 (P.M.O.), File #313.45, 210652-3.



subscriptions to Canadian academic journals.<sup>326</sup> In response, the University created a “Canadian Book Exhibition” to display the gifts.<sup>327</sup> It was the sort of gesture that appealed to Diefenbaker, who enjoyed such overt displays of support.

Before he left Mexico, Diefenbaker took the opportunity to discuss a number of issues in private, first with Mexico’s Foreign Minister, Manuel Tello and then with López. Accompanied by Irwin, Diefenbaker discussed Mexico’s stand on the Law of the Sea and Canadian membership in the OAS with Tello. This was an opportunity to see how much of the personal relationship that Diefenbaker had established with López would translate into tangible support. The results were decidedly mixed.

The main issue discussed involved a Canadian proposal to modify the rules that governed the Law of the Sea. The first two UN Law of the Sea Conferences occurred during Diefenbaker’s years as Prime Minister (1958 and 1960) and the Canadian delegation proposed that fishing rights be extended beyond the three mile limit to twelve miles.<sup>328</sup> The delegation also suggested that underwater mineral rights be extended to a depth beyond 200 feet.<sup>329</sup> The proposals had not received the two-thirds vote they needed at the first conference so Diefenbaker now sought Mexico’s support. The Mexican government, however, believed that its sovereignty extended past the twelve-mile limit; thus the Canadian proposal would involve a relinquishing of sovereign territory. Tello was adamant that Mexico would not surrender any of its historical rights.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 210652-3.

<sup>327</sup> Dispatch from Irwin to Green, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 73 (P.M.O.), File # 313.45, 64733.

<sup>328</sup> John Hilliker and Donald Barry, Canada’s Department of External Affairs. Vol. 2: Coming of Age, 1946-1968 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 220.

<sup>329</sup> Hilliker, 221.

<sup>330</sup> Record of Conversation between Diefenbaker and Tello, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 73 (P.M.O.), File # 313.45, 64738.

On the issue of the OAS, Diefenbaker and Tello were closer. Tello expressed Mexico's hope that Canada would join the organization and stated that it would be a "most welcome development" if Ottawa would send an observer to the next meeting.<sup>331</sup> Diefenbaker was more prepared than he had been in the past to consider this possibility and took this endorsement as one more reason to join. He would never be closer to taking such a step than when in personal conversations with Mexico's president.

On the same day that Diefenbaker spoke to Tello he also had the opportunity to speak privately with López. This time the focus of the meeting was on economic rather than geo-political issues. He mentioned the Law of the Sea, but expressed his appreciation for Mexico's position. To antagonize López, he realized, would have been counter-productive. Instead, he brought up the application by a Canadian company, Dominion Steel and Coal, for a Mexican steel rails contract, stating that, "the successful consummation of this transaction would much more than anything else at the present time strengthen the commercial relations between Canada and Mexico."<sup>332</sup> The Mexican government eventually gave the contract to the Canadian company and Diefenbaker fast-tracked the company's request for export insurance from the Canadian government through cabinet. During the same discussion López told Diefenbaker that a business deal had been successfully negotiated by Canada's Pemex Polymer Company with the Mexican state oil monopoly.<sup>333</sup>

Here was an example of Diefenbaker's personal diplomacy at it best. He thrived in a personal setting where he was dealing with someone who could make decisions. He

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 64739.

<sup>332</sup> Memorandum on Conversation between Diefenbaker and López at the National Palace, Mexico, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 73 (P.M.O.), File # 313.45, 64740-2.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid., 64740-2.

was uncomfortable when surrounded by officials, believing that they impeded his ability to make the necessary connections. His telling remark to Basil Robinson was that “diplomats always found a complicated way of expressing simple thoughts.”<sup>334</sup> He changed his mind on the value of having officials present only after a few meetings where he had forgotten the details and promises he had made.<sup>335</sup>

In López he found a leader who also excelled in personal diplomacy and the two forged a positive relationship without actually signing any new treaties or coming to any major agreements. Perhaps the best example of the relaxed nature of their relationship occurred during a luncheon held in Diefenbaker’s honour in Mexico City. Both Diefenbaker and López threw away their prepared speeches and spoke about the mutual respect they shared and the “values and objectives held in common by the two peoples represented.”<sup>336</sup>

Once again Diefenbaker strained the historical record in his effort to emphasize connections. It was easy to do, as he tended not to apply Canadian values and standards to non-Commonwealth countries. In his view, countries like Mexico could not be expected to be held to the same standards. Had Mexico been a Commonwealth nation, such as the Federation of the West Indies, its one-party rule and corporatist system would be cause for concern. However, since it was not, he was able to overlook these failings. The situation was similar with both Cuba and China, where human rights violations and communist governments did not preclude the pursuit of trading relations. By contrast, the apartheid policies of South Africa, a Commonwealth country, were unacceptable.

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<sup>334</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker’s World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 119.

<sup>335</sup> Hilliker, 141.

<sup>336</sup> Dispatch from Irwin to Green, May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 73 (P.M.O.), File # 313.45, 64734.

Diefenbaker's visit to Mexico, unlike López's visit to Canada, succeeded in raising public awareness of Canadian-Mexican relations in both countries. In Canada, local and national papers such as the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and the Regina *Leader Post*, covered the trip.<sup>337</sup> While in Mexico, no less than seven papers wrote editorials praising his visit.<sup>338</sup> Howard Green would capitalize on this increased awareness of Mexico and by extension, Latin America, by asking Canadians for their opinion as to whether or not Canada should join the OAS. The public's response was, it turned out, deeply influenced by pressure that Washington was putting on Canada to join. The most popular response was "no" with the justification being that if the United States wanted Canada to join, then it should not.

Upon his return from Mexico, Diefenbaker delivered a report on his visit to the House of Commons. He spoke of the closeness that was developing between the two countries: "I can say there are no basic differences in our approach to world problems."<sup>339</sup> He added that, "there remained both a place and a necessity for consultations at a high level with political leaders not only of countries associated with Canada by tradition and alliance, but those of all other states whose similarities in background, outlook and interests are bringing them closer to us."<sup>340</sup> The speech was praised by the Conservatives as well as the opposition Liberals and CCF.<sup>341</sup>

For Diefenbaker the trip was a resounding success and marked the high point of his interest in Latin America. His reception by both the Mexican public and López

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<sup>337</sup> *Globe and Mail* April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, 2. *Toronto Star*, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, 3. *Leader Post*, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960, 18.

<sup>338</sup> For a list of the papers and photocopies of the editorials see DCCA Vol. 73 (P.M.O.), file #313.45, 64743-55.

<sup>339</sup> House of Commons Debates, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 3223.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 3224.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, 3223-4.

gratified him and helped strengthen his belief that Mexico was a natural friend to Canada. It also led him to promote Canadian business enterprises in Mexico and rethink his opposition to Canadian membership in the OAS.

The trip proved to be only the first of a number of visits by members of the Diefenbaker government to Mexico. These later trips would serve to reinforce the beliefs that Diefenbaker developed during his own visit. Both Howard Green and Pierre Sevigny, Canada's Associate Minister of National Defence, traveled there as well. In 1960, a month after Diefenbaker returned from Mexico, Green undertook a tour of Latin America. His official reason was to represent Canada at the celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Argentina's independence, but he also visited Chile and Peru. Of note, his trip included a brief stop in Mexico City on his way back from South America where he met with Tullo and discussed the state of Canadian-Mexican relations.<sup>342</sup> Like Diefenbaker, Green was favourably impressed with Mexico and the potential for growth in Canada's relations with Latin America. As one of the few ministers who had Diefenbaker's confidence with regard to foreign affairs, Green helped influence the Prime Minister's geo-political view of Mexico and Latin America.

In the interests of continuing to build upon his successful visit, and the brief stop-over by Green, Diefenbaker appointed Pierre Sevigny as a Special Ambassador to Mexico and had him stop-over in Mexico on his way to a special meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, where he was to be Canada's representative. Along with Sevigny went a totem pole carved in Victoria, B.C.<sup>343</sup> The pole was a gift from the Government of Canada to the people of Mexico for the celebrations marking

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<sup>342</sup> *House of Commons Debates*, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 4337.

<sup>343</sup> "Independence centennial gift for Mexico" Cabinet Conclusions, September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1960. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2747, 5-6.

Mexico's 150<sup>th</sup> year of independence and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution. Though on the surface it seemed a strange gift, it symbolized one of the commonalities between Canada and Mexico that Diefenbaker had emphasized during his visit — their Aboriginal heritage.

Like Diefenbaker's previous attempts to emphasize similar democratic traditions between Canada and Mexico, the totem pole as a symbol of a shared Aboriginal heritage was a strained one. While both Canada and Mexico admittedly had pre-colonial Aboriginal populations, there was little that those populations had in common, or in the way in which Europeans had interacted with them.

Nonetheless, it was the perception of commonalities that led López to Canada and Diefenbaker to Mexico and that was the driving force behind Diefenbaker's attempts to increase Canadian trade with Mexico and other parts of Latin America. Though the Latin American region accounted for very little in terms of Canadian external trade and geo-political interests, Diefenbaker saw it as an area rife with opportunity for Canada. Mexico, one of the largest and most influential nations in Latin America, would be a key player.

There were limits, however, to how far Diefenbaker was prepared to go in developing the Canada-Latin America relationship. This was evident in 1960 when López sent Diefenbaker a personal letter asking for his assistance in resolving the growing conflict between the US and Cuba. López addressed the letter "My dear Prime Minister and distinguished friend" and began with the words: "The strained relations between the Governments of Cuba and the United States of America are the source of my

deepest concern.”<sup>344</sup> He hoped that Canada would consent to join with Brazil and Mexico to help negotiate an end to the crisis.<sup>345</sup> Diefenbaker feared that the US would respond negatively to such pressure and replied that he could not commit to the effort.<sup>346</sup>

There was a subtle difference between Canada and Mexico in their relationship with the US. Though, in the end, neither country bowed to US pressure to cut its relations with Cuba or join the US embargo, Diefenbaker ultimately put Canada’s forces on alert and stood by the US during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Mexico did not, stating “their [the United States] attitude in international affairs reflects the belief that what they do is good because it is they who do it.”<sup>347</sup> While both Canada and Mexico sought greater autonomy from the US in foreign policy, Diefenbaker accepted that Canada was fully on the side of the western democracies. For him, it was a case of offering support to the US because it was in Canada’s interest to support the side of freedom.

Diefenbaker’s refusal to support Mexico’s proposal did not damage the goodwill that his visit to Mexico had generated. Less than a year later, during his State of the Union message, López mentioned the close cordial friendship that Mexico enjoyed with both Canada and the US.<sup>348</sup> Mentioning Canada at the same time as the US was a reflection of the respect which he had for Canada.<sup>349</sup> Just over a year later, Ambassador Irwin was able to go so far as to say that “Mexico looks at Canada as a hemispheric

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<sup>344</sup> Letter from López to Diefenbaker, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 9 (Personal and Confidential), File #292, 425019.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Letter from Diefenbaker to López, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA Vol. 56 (Personal and Confidential) File 845 Cuba, 425016-7.

<sup>347</sup> “Council of the Organization of American States: W.A. Irwin to Secretary of State for External Affairs.” N.A.C., RG 25, Vol. 5241, File 7296-40 part 4.

<sup>348</sup> “Political Situation in Mexico: Report from W. A. Irwin to Secretary of State for External Affairs.” N.A.C., RG 25, Vol. 5228, File 6729-40 part 5.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

ally.”<sup>350</sup> It was never made clear which countries or country Canada and Mexico were allied against, but it was undeniable that Canada and Mexico were closer in 1962 than they were when Diefenbaker took power in 1957.

But while he succeeded in strengthening the Canadian-Mexican political relationship, Diefenbaker was less successful in attempting to unlock Mexico’s economic markets for Canadian exports — the other major goal of his Mexican policies. In his efforts to do so, he once again attempted to rely on personal initiatives — and this severely limited his achievements. He did not seem to recognize that the personal approach that he used to improve the broad state of Canada-Mexico relations might not work as effectively in achieving substantive improvements in trade. Trade agreements were achieved by methods that were not his strong suit — slow and sometimes endless negotiations involving junior and senior bureaucrats, which produced a succession of texts that embodied impenetrable bureaucratic language. He had no patience for such lengthy and arduous processes and preferred to intervene personally when issues came before him. It was for this reason undoubtedly that no major economic or trade agreement was signed between Canada and Mexico while Diefenbaker was Prime Minister.

Most of the impetus for new trade by Canadian companies in Mexico came from the companies themselves. However, Diefenbaker did attempt, on an individual case-by-case basis, to give some assistance to those that were attempting to exploit the Mexican market — usually by either personal diplomacy or by assuring Cabinet approval where it was needed.

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<sup>350</sup> “Canada-Cuba Relations: W.A. Irwin to Secretary of State for External Affairs.” N.A.C. RG 25, Vol. 5076, File 4568-40 part 9.



The first major Canadian company to approach the Diefenbaker government was the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation. Its officials contacted the government in 1959, prior to Diefenbaker's visit to Mexico, and stated that they wished to obtain government approval and insurance for the sale of approximately 150,000 tons of steel rail, worth approximately \$25 million, to the National Railways of Mexico.<sup>351</sup> Donald Fleming, the Minister of Finance, recommended that the sale be approved.<sup>352</sup> Cabinet discussed the issue on six different occasions throughout 1959, each time putting off the decision for another meeting. Diefenbaker wanted to be sure that no Canadian jobs would be lost and wanted more information on the deal before they granted export insurance. It was granted approval following Diefenbaker's return from Mexico. The timing was hardly coincidental, reflecting the upbeat mood in Canadian-Mexican relations following the trip. Dominion Steel and Coal had promised it would not cut Canadian jobs, and the Mexican government announced that no European firms had been invited to bid on the contract, demonstrating that it wanted Canadian investment dollars.<sup>353</sup>

Still, Diefenbaker's trip to Mexico left him with the impression that Canada was not properly exploiting the Mexican market. Shortly after his return to Canada, he informed Cabinet that during his stay he had an opportunity to speak with the French Ambassador and the latter had informed him that since the end of the Second World War France's exports to Mexico had more than tripled. Furthermore, this was in commodities that Canada could provide. Diefenbaker pointed out that Canada was not taking

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<sup>351</sup> "Export credits insurance - Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation - Sale to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1959. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2744, 12-13.

<sup>352</sup> "Export credits insurance - Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation - Sale to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, April 28th, 1959. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2744, 3.

<sup>353</sup> "Export credits insurance - Steel rails for Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, October 24th, 1959. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2745, 9-10.

advantage of its opportunities, and Cabinet agreed to look at what steps would be required to expand Canadian exports to Latin America.<sup>354</sup>

Diefenbaker's visit to Mexico had a profound effect on the speed of Cabinet decisions regarding business dealings with Mexico. An application by the National Steel Car Corporation to sell 144 passenger coaches valued at \$18 million to Mexico was approved in one sitting of Cabinet.<sup>355</sup> The application by Trans-Canada Air Lines to sell five North Star aircraft to the Mexican Airline LAUSA was similarly approved immediately by Cabinet,<sup>356</sup> as was the application by Montreal Locomotives Works Ltd. for the sale of 75 diesel electric locomotives to the National Railways of Mexico.<sup>357</sup> The speedy approval of those applications was in direct contrast to the endless Cabinet discussions around the Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation's request.

Diefenbaker was always concerned about the impact of the government's decisions on offshore business on the Canadian domestic economy. Approval for the Dominion Steel and Coal Company's Mexican bid was withheld in part because of fears that the company might close a mining operation in Newfoundland. Cabinet agreed to support the bid only when it was assured that the mine would remain open.<sup>358</sup>

A similar concern about affected Canadian interests was evident with the attempts to establish a bilateral air agreement between Canada and Mexico. Before a deal could be reached Diefenbaker wanted to know if, "Trans Canada's operations would be

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<sup>354</sup> "Insurance of export credit on sale of steel rails to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2746, 15.

<sup>355</sup> "Export credits insurance - National Steel Car Corporation, Ltd. - Sale of coaches to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2746, 4 -5.

<sup>356</sup> "Sale of TCA North Star aircraft to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1961. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, 4.

<sup>357</sup> "Export financing for sale of diesel electric locomotives to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1962. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6192, 9.

<sup>358</sup> "Export Credits Insurance - Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation - Sale to Mexico." Cabinet Conclusions, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1959. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2744, 3.

adversely affected.”<sup>359</sup> Only when the Trans-Canada Airlines had indicated that its revenues would not be affected in the immediate future by the agreement did Cabinet give its approval.<sup>360</sup>

All these proposals increased Canadian exports to Mexico and improved the Canadian-Mexican economic relationship. They were all, however, one time deals and despite his efforts, Diefenbaker never created any permanent legislation or signed any agreements or treaties on trade with Mexico. The necessary groundwork at the administrative level was not laid and the potential that the Mexican market offered was not fully exploited.

On the other hand, Diefenbaker attempted, and largely succeeded, in improving Canada-Mexico relations. His personal connection with Mexican President Adolfo López Mateos was fostered over the course of two state visits and there was continuing correspondence between the two leaders. They were of the same mind regarding many of the hemispheric questions faced by both Canada and Mexico, as exemplified in the decisions of their respective governments to join the US embargo of Cuba. Although no bilateral agreements or treaties were signed as a result of the connection that was made between the two leaders, it is notable that trade between Canada and Mexico increased, if modestly, during the Diefenbaker years.

Diefenbaker’s Mexican policy was not a radical departure from the policy approach taken by the St. Laurent government, but the method by which it was implemented, entailing the personal interventions and involvement of the Prime Minister,

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<sup>359</sup> “Canada-Mexico air agreement - Verbal report of the Cabinet Committee.” Cabinet Conclusions, October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1961. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, 8.

<sup>360</sup> “Canada-Mexico Air Agreement.” Cabinet Conclusions, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1961. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, 9.

were both characteristic of Diefenbaker's style of leadership and indicative of his approach to important foreign policy questions.

## CHAPTER 5 DIEFENBAKER AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES

Created in 1908, the OAS and its precursor the Pan-American Union, included every nation in the western hemisphere except Canada until 1988, the year Canada finally joined. In 1960 it almost joined the organization when Prime Minister Diefenbaker, who had initially opposed Canadian membership, endorsed the idea. It proved to be a short-lived policy as he eventually decided that there were good reasons for not joining the organization. This brief flirtation with OAS membership has been seen by various writers as just another one of Diefenbaker's policy "flip flops,"<sup>361</sup> or rather as indicative of his typical indecision on important foreign policy issues. Yet this is too simplistic an explanation and belies the shifting and often complex nature of the influences that came to bear on the question of OAS membership.

Diefenbaker's approach to the question of OAS membership reflected his determination that Canada should keep a respectful distance from the US on foreign policy questions, in short, his search for greater autonomy for Canada. The usefulness of membership in the OAS measured in relation to this larger foreign policy goal, shifted in response to pressure emanating from various Latin American countries and the US. As well, domestic influences within Canada affected his government's perspective on the question. And, as in the case of other issues in Canada-Latin America relations, so did Diefenbaker's tendency to involve himself personally in the issues.

The origins of the OAS can be traced back to the first International Conference of American States, held in Washington D.C., in 1889 and various conferences that followed roughly every decade or so. The OAS was officially founded in 1948 at the

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<sup>361</sup> Peter C. Newman, Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), xxi.

Ninth International Conference of American States, in Bogotá, Columbia, with the signing of the Charter of the Organization of American States. The slow growth of the organization from idea to form coincided with a growing pan-Americanism in the western hemisphere and the increasing influence of the US in the region. Yet as pan-Americanism increased and the influence of the US grew, Canada remained removed and played little or no role in these developments.<sup>362</sup>

This situation reflected Canada's focus on its relationship with the British Empire and Western Europe. Canadians did not share the sense of revolutionary struggle or the common thread of republicanism that connected the US with most of Latin America, and most Canadians felt little connection or shared sense of identity with the region.

Furthermore, following Confederation, Canadians had more immediate concerns than establishing close connections with Latin America. Busy expanding across the top of the North American continent, Canadians rarely cast their eyes further south than the US. Canada had more than enough problems simply resisting the orbital pull of the US and Britain.

Canadian membership in the organization, however, was desired by various Latin American nations and the US. The former hoped that Canada could act to mitigate the growing influence of the US. US leaders hoped that Canadian support for their initiatives would help smooth over fears amongst the rest of the hemisphere of US imperialism. As early as 1910, when the headquarters of the Pan-American Union was constructed, US Secretary of State Elihu Root ordered the addition of a 22<sup>nd</sup> chair, inscribed with the

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<sup>362</sup> Peter McKenna, Canada and the O.A.S.: From Dilettante to Full Partner (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995), 33.

name “Canada,” to the board room, in anticipation of Canada’s eventual participation in the organization.<sup>363</sup>

Though the Canadian government sent two missions to the region in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to explore the possibility of expanding its presence in that part of the world, its potential for Canada remained largely untapped.<sup>364</sup> By 1957, the region was still not important enough to have warranted a single visit by Canada’s foreign affairs minister (although Trade Minister C.D. Howe had traveled there in the 1950s) and Canadian trade with Latin America was still vastly overshadowed by trade with the US and Europe. The diplomatic and economic distance between Canada and Latin America was exemplified by Canada’s continued refusal to join the OAS.

The election of Diefenbaker initially did little to change this. Yet despite his reluctance to discuss the issue of OAS membership, Latin American nations continued to pressure Canada to join. Particularly in the emerging bi-polar post-war world, Latin American governments sought to mitigate the hegemony of the US in the region and with the change of government in Canada they saw the potential for renewed interest on the part of the Canadians.

Diefenbaker, however, was wary of making a commitment. He feared that Canada would inevitably be faced with the tough choice of supporting US policies over the objections of Latin American nations or siding with the latter against the US. He viewed the OAS as a no-win situation. Furthermore, the US relationship with Latin America had become quite volatile in the 1950s. Anti-American sentiment in the region was growing, as demonstrated by the riots that greeted Vice-President Richard Nixon in

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<sup>363</sup> Douglas Anglin, “United States Opposition to Canadian Membership in the Pan-American Union: A Canadian View” International Organization (Winter 1961), 2.

<sup>364</sup> Ogelsby, 25.

Venezuela. As well, Diefenbaker's knowledge of the region was very limited; he was basically unaware of the strong desire for a greater Canadian involvement in the region coming from Latin American nations. With his limited information and concern about the dangers of being caught in the middle between the US and Latin American countries, Diefenbaker initially saw little opportunity for the advancement of Canadian interests in joining the OAS.

Diefenbaker's interest in the organization grew slowly and was based on personal reports. These began with E. J. Broome's visit to Latin America. Broome, a Conservative Member of Parliament from the Vancouver South riding, was the first official representative of the Diefenbaker government to travel to the region. He represented Canada at the Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference, held July 24<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1958, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While there, he held discussions with a number of Brazilian government officials and sent back a lengthy report to Diefenbaker explaining that the Brazilian government held Canada in high regard and that many of the Brazilians with whom he had spoken to wanted Canada to join the OAS. It was their hope, Broome reported, that Canada's "voice added to Latin America's would balance the scales as far as the United States was concerned."<sup>365</sup>

The report did not radically alter Diefenbaker's view that membership in the OAS was not in Canada's best interest. It ended up as a minor footnote to his early foreign policy deliberations since it arrived in the midst of the hurried planning for his first world tour. Still, the strong Brazilian desire for Canada to play an important role in inter-American affairs quietly struck a chord. Increasing Canada's status on the world stage

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<sup>365</sup> Letter from E. J. Broome to John G. Diefenbaker, August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister's Officer Series, Vol. 2, File 827, 001118-001124.



was of no small importance to Diefenbaker, particularly in light of his continued personal competition with Pearson, who was now leader of the Official Opposition in Parliament.

Diefenbaker's tour of Europe and Asia did not produce invitations to Canada from other countries to play a greater role in the world. If anything, Diefenbaker determined that there were limits to how much Canada could influence world affairs. The contrasting message that he would get from the leaders of Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and the West Indies was quite different. They wanted Canada to extend and deepen its relationship with the region.

Latin America had attributes that were appealing to Diefenbaker; the region was largely virgin territory for Canada in terms of its external relations. Neither King, St. Laurent nor Pearson had ever taken any major steps, beyond a couple of trade missions, towards increasing Canada's role politically or economically in Latin America. Here was an opportunity to operate outside of the Liberal foreign policy tradition.

Latin America began to take on a more significant place in Diefenbaker's thinking and by extension, the OAS did as well. Adding and reinforcing this growing interest in the region was the visit of Sidney Smith, shortly after the return of Broome. It was the first visit by a Canadian foreign affairs minister to Latin America.<sup>366</sup> Smith spent much of his time in Brazil and he explored a number of issues with various representatives of Latin American nations, but the central theme of most of the discussions was Canadian membership in the OAS.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> Letter from Sidney Smith to John G. Diefenbaker, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister's Officer Series File B827, 419108.

<sup>367</sup> Letter from Sidney Smith to John G. Diefenbaker, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister's Officer Series, File B827, 419110.

During his trip Smith also had the opportunity to have a private meeting with Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek. He reported to Diefenbaker that during the meeting, Kubitschek expressed the hope that Canada would join the OAS. Kubitschek told Smith that “Canada could play an important role in the Organization.” Smith responded that his visit was a reflection of Canada’s increased interest in the region.<sup>368</sup> He later informed Diefenbaker that his trip left him with the impression that, “the Latin American countries are very desirous of establishing closer relations with us.”<sup>369</sup>

Kubitschek was obviously well prepared for his meeting with Smith. Speaking English throughout, he raised a number of points with the Canadian minister regarding Canada’s role in Latin America and he drew a number of interesting parallels between Canada and Brazil, including the presence of Aboriginal people in both countries. Anticipating that Smith would deliver a full report to Diefenbaker, he made a point of making a positive reference to the Prime Minister’s heritage. He commented on the fact that his own grandmother had been born in Eastern Germany and added “that it could only happen in Brazil and Canada that the grandsons of immigrants could attain the highest post in government.”<sup>370</sup>

Smith’s report drew attention to a number of points that Diefenbaker should consider in thinking about the OAS membership issue. First, there was evidence that most Latin American nations wanted Canada to join. Second, Canada enjoyed a great

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<sup>368</sup> Sidney Smith, “Memorandum of a Conversation with President Kubitschek”, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 19, File 539, 012453.

<sup>369</sup> Letter from Sidney Smith to John G. Diefenbaker, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister’s Officer Series, File B827, 419110.

<sup>370</sup> Memorandum of a Conservation with President Kubitschek at Luncheon at Laranjeiras Palace, Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister’s Office Series, File 539, 012452.

deal of goodwill in the region. And third, leaders such as Kubitshek spoke warmly about Canada being involved in the region.

Kubitshek's personal entreaties were, however, wasted in this instance. While the Brazilian President left a very favourable impression on Smith, the Minister had yet to earn Diefenbaker's full trust in terms of advocating new policy initiatives. Smith would come to have some influence on Diefenbaker regarding Canadian policy towards Mexico and Argentina, but his recommendations on the OAS failed to get Diefenbaker's early support. The Prime Minister, it turns out, would be more open to the entreaties of Smith's successor, Howard Green, and would also be deeply influenced by his own journeys to Latin America.

As was so often the case, it was his direct personal involvement in the OAS question that was most influential in shaping Diefenbaker's policy decisions. The early pressure from Latin American nations laid the ground work for Diefenbaker's policy positions but it was not until his own visit to Latin America that membership was transformed from an unlikely possibility to an important opportunity. He followed up the visits of Broome and Smith with his Latin American trip when he traveled to Mexico in 1960. This was in response to the visit to Ottawa of López in 1959.

By 1959 Diefenbaker was becoming far more familiar with the issues relating to foreign policy. He had a new External Affairs Minister, Howard Green, whose views not only complemented his own but who had some influence on him. In many ways Diefenbaker gave Green more freedom in shaping Canada's foreign relations than Smith and the new Minister was a strong proponent of strengthening Canadian-Latin American

relations.<sup>371</sup> With Green offering support and Diefenbaker more comfortable with foreign affairs, and exhibiting a greater willingness to move in new directions, the Prime Minister was greatly influenced by his trip to Mexico; he was now more willing than ever before to consider membership for Canada in the OAS.

During the trip, he spoke of how the current climate of international affairs was pushing Canada towards a greater involvement in Latin America and bringing Canada and Mexico closer together.<sup>372</sup> His statements reflected his view that Canada was trapped by the Cold War and its ties to the US. Jamie Glazov has argued that Diefenbaker's anti-communist and anti-American ideas were contradictory and paralyzed his government.<sup>373</sup> The reality is that his anti-communism and concern about the overwhelming influence of the US were not contradictory at all. In fact these views led him to seek alternative areas for trade and political support, particularly in Latin America. The climate of international affairs was pushing Canada and Mexico closer together.

Despite their mutually supportive public pronouncements, it was in private meetings that Diefenbaker and López connected with each other. As a sign of how much Diefenbaker's views on membership in the OAS had changed, he was the one who first brought up the issue in his conversation with Mexico's Foreign Minister, Manuel Tello. Tello expressed Mexico's hope that Canada would end its self-imposed isolation and

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<sup>371</sup> Transcribed Oral Interview of Howard Green by Jack Granatstein. Produced by the York University's Institute for Behavioural Research, copy in the Vancouver City Archives, Howard Green Papers, Box MSS 903, Volume 605 D-1, File 2, 25.

<sup>372</sup> Text of Speech given by John G. Diefenbaker in Mexico City, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, Vol. 258, File 313.45, 210665-7.

<sup>373</sup> Jamie Glazov, Canadian Policy toward Khrushchev's Soviet Union (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 170.

join.<sup>374</sup> López echoed Tello's comments and pressed Diefenbaker to tangibly bring Canada more fully into the inter-American sphere.

On his return home from Mexico it appeared that Diefenbaker had made up his mind to bring Canada into the OAS. He wrote two memoranda. In the first he stated, "that the advantages of joining the organization outweigh the disadvantages."<sup>375</sup> He offered a more nuanced interpretation in his second memo when he discussed the Latin American economies and their potential for growth, stating that "the O.A.S. symbolizes a new world and emphasizes the need of American solidarity." He felt that "the only interpreter to the Commonwealth of this new realignment in power in the Western Hemisphere is Canada being associated with the O.A.S."<sup>376</sup>

The most interesting comment was perhaps the connection made between the Commonwealth and the OAS. Diefenbaker sought to increase Canada's role in the world and both he and Green saw the Commonwealth as a vehicle to do this; it was Green's belief that Canada would surpass Britain, France and West Germany in terms of its influence on the world before the end of the century.<sup>377</sup> Joining the OAS would not only expand Canada's role in the region but allow Canada to strengthen its position as an influential leader in the Commonwealth.

The victory of Fidel Castro and the movement of Cuba towards Communism created a further impetus for Canada to join the OAS, or at least swept away one of the

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<sup>374</sup> Record of Conversation between John G. Diefenbaker and Manuel Tello, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, Vol. 73, File 313.45, 64739.

<sup>375</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, "Memorandum" April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 572, File 890, 434429.

<sup>376</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, "Memorandum re. Organization of American States" April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 572, File 890, 434430.

<sup>377</sup> Howard Green, "Canadian-American Assembly" A Review of John Sloan Dickey's The United States and Canada for the Globe and Mail. City of Vancouver Archives, Howard Green Papers, Box MSS 903, Vol. 605 F-5, File 9, 4.

arguments for not joining. While refusing to endorse the Revolution itself, Diefenbaker refused to break off relations with Castro. He argued strongly that it was not the policy of Canada to change the nature of its relationship with a country because of a change of government — although “the continuance of trade relations in no way constitute[d] approval, overt or tacit, of the Government of Cuba, nor [did] that action reveal any alteration in opposition to communism and its works.”<sup>378</sup> It was a policy that was popular amongst Latin American nations, many of whom feared the spread of communism but saw the reactions of the US to the Cuban Revolution as heavy handed and counter-productive.

Washington’s mild reaction to Diefenbaker’s refusal to break relations with the new Castro regime had the effect of weakening one of the fundamental arguments for opposing Canadian membership in the OAS — the danger of siding against the United States on a specific issue. Here was a prime example of such a situation, and the US response gave Canadians little to worry about. Though Canadian-US relations were strained, they did not suffer greatly as officials in the US State Department believed that the Canadian government was acting out of ignorance, not malice.<sup>379</sup> It appeared that Canada could stand to chart a different course from the US.

The Cuban situation led Latin American nations to lobby even harder for Canada to join the OAS because it plainly demonstrated the inability of Latin American nations to effectively counter US policies that they opposed. Some Latin American leaders believed that Cuba would not be inhibited from spreading its revolution elsewhere, but

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<sup>378</sup> Letter to Alan Swabey from John G. Diefenbaker. DCC, Prime Minister’s Office Series, Box 477, Vol. 722, 369872.

<sup>379</sup> Edelgard Mahant and Graeme Mount, Invisible and Inaudible in Washington: American Policies toward Canada (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 61.

most believed that the US economic embargo of Cuba would simply push it further into the communist bloc.

Diefenbaker sought to gauge the feelings in some of the Latin American countries, following the Revolution, toward Canadian membership in the OAS. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1961, he spoke with Joseph Couillard, Canada's Ambassador to Venezuela, who indicated that Venezuela still hoped that Canada would join and act as a counter-weight to the United States.<sup>380</sup> Diefenbaker came to believe that it was not just the larger Latin American countries that wanted Canada to join but that broad consensus existed in Latin America for Canadian membership.

Argentina was another country that exerted an influence on Diefenbaker's regarding OAS membership. Once again it was the case of a charismatic leader who connected on a personal level with Diefenbaker. Through personal appeals and economic promises, Argentine President Dr. Arturo Frondizi sought to encourage Canadian interest in his country and in the region more generally.

Diefenbaker was elected Prime Minister at approximately the same time as Frondizi was elected Argentine President, the latter gaining power on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1958 in Argentina's first elections following the 1955 military coup that overthrew Juan Domingo Perón. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1958, Diefenbaker was given a report on the election outcome. What he read led him to believe that he should attempt to strengthen Argentine-Canadian relations. The report summarized the attitudes of the new government and tellingly stated that "there may be a shift of emphasis [by Argentina]

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<sup>380</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, "Memorandum re: Conversation with Mr. Couillard, Ambassador to Venezuela", July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office and Leader of the Opposition Office Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047496.

away from the United States.”<sup>381</sup> Considering that Diefenbaker was of the belief that Canada needed to do much the same thing, the outlook for an improvement in Canada-Argentina relations was good.

Fronzizi saw Canadian membership in the OAS as a way to reduce US domination of the organization. He pressured Canada to join. The parallels between Fronzizi’s attempts to reshape the Argentine-US relationship and Diefenbaker’s efforts to alter the Canada-US relationship are striking. Both men saw the answer to be in multilateral organizations, which could serve to dilute US influence. For Diefenbaker the premier international organization in this regard was the Commonwealth; for Fronzizi it was the OAS expanded in size.

In 1960 and 1961, Fronzizi had a number of opportunities to exhort the Canadian government to join the OAS. The first was early in 1960 when Green traveled to Latin America where he hoped to, as he stated in the House of Commons, “further the good will between Canada and the Latin American countries.”<sup>382</sup> Green attended the May 20<sup>th</sup> independence celebrations in Argentina, demonstrating Canada’s emerging interests in the region. He had a private meeting with Fronzizi where the two discussed Canada’s membership in the OAS, and Fronzizi expressed his hope that Canada would join.<sup>383</sup>

Green’s visit was a success in terms of promoting stronger Canadian-Argentine relations.

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<sup>381</sup> Summary Report from the Department of External Affairs, “Election in Argentina”, March 14, 1958. DCCA, Prime Minister’s Office Series, Vol. 100, File A691, 086102-3.

<sup>382</sup> “Latin America – Request for report on visit by Minister”, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1960. House of Common Debates, 4335.

<sup>383</sup> “Letter from Arturo Fronzizi to John G. Diefenbaker”, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047518.



Regarding OAS membership for Canada, Green left convinced that “there was no single thing we could do that would bring greater immediate returns in goodwill.”<sup>384</sup>

One year later, in August 1961, Frondizi had an opportunity to make his case again as Pierre Sevigny, Canada’s Associate Minister of National Defence, traveled to Argentina, following his attendance at the Conference of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council, which took place in Punta del Este, Uruguay. At both the Conference and during the visit the pressure on Canada to join the O.A.S. continued to build.

At the Conference the Canadian delegation encountered a warm reception from most Latin American nations. Heath Macquarrie, a Conservative M.P. who was part of the delegation, later reported back to Diefenbaker that “among the many Latin Americans I had a chance to meet I found universal goodwill toward Canada and yourself, and a genuine desire that we join the O.A.S.”<sup>385</sup>

Macquarrie was a strong supporter of Canadian membership, declaring in the House of Commons that he thought Canada should join.<sup>386</sup> However, he made the wrong argument in trying to influence Diefenbaker when he said: “I am firmly convinced that the Punta Del Este conference was a real success and it is to be hoped that the governments of Latin America will avail themselves of U.S. aid and leadership.”<sup>387</sup> For Diefenbaker, more US involvement in Latin America meant less space for Canadian interests.

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<sup>384</sup> Letter to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs “Minister’s Visit on the Occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Argentine May Revolution.” NAC, RG 25, Vol. 5033, File 1607-40 part 18, 8.

<sup>385</sup> Letter from Heath Macquarrie to John G. Diefenbaker, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister’s Office Series, Vol. 572, File 891, 434458.

<sup>386</sup> Heath Macquarrie, “Department of External Affairs – Supply”, Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>, 1961. House of Commons Debates, 8114.

<sup>387</sup> Letter from Heath Macquarrie to John G. Diefenbaker, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister’s Office Series, Vol. 572, File 891, 434458.

Sevigny was also impressed with the reception that the Canadian delegation received from various Latin American nations. His report to Diefenbaker was far more detailed than Macquarrie's and explained the US position towards Latin America before discussing the many benefits that Canada would enjoy by joining the OAS. Showing a deeper understanding of both Diefenbaker and geo-politics than Macquarrie, Sevigny stated:

By allowing Canada to drift into the Organization of American States, the Canadian government stands to lose some of the political advantage which would inevitably flow from a positive response to the request of American States. From the international as well as from the internal point of view, it would seem preferable to dramatize Canada's position and serve notice that if Canada joins the inter-American system, it does not wish to remain an acquiescent partner, but intends on the contrary to play a useful role.<sup>388</sup>

His report concluded that Canada's technical knowledge was invaluable to the developing Latin American countries and that Canada had an opportunity to play a major role in the region.<sup>389</sup>

Sevigny then traveled to Brazil and Argentina.<sup>390</sup> In Argentina he met with Frondizi who gave him a letter to be delivered to Diefenbaker. In it Frondizi urged Diefenbaker to take the final step and have Canada join the organization.<sup>391</sup> In addition to making the personal appeal for Canadian membership, he pointed out that Canada could serve as a bridge between Latin America and Europe; Canada was, he said, "linked by destiny to its American sisters."<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>388</sup> Pierre Sevigny, "Memorandum concerning my recent trip to South America", Sept. 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047512.

<sup>389</sup> Pierre Sevigny, "Memorandum concerning my recent trip to South America", Sept. 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047515.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, 047509.

<sup>391</sup> "Letter from Arturo Frondizi to John G. Diefenbaker", August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047518-22.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 047518-22.

In the above mentioned cases, Frondizi made his pleas for Canadian membership through intermediaries, which was not the most effective manner to communicate with or influence Diefenbaker. However, he had the opportunity to make his case in person when he visited Canada in November 1961. It was the first official visit by an Argentine Head of State to Canada.<sup>393</sup> Frondizi and Diefenbaker had lunch together, along with their respective foreign ministers. Later, Frondizi visited Montreal accompanied by Sevigny, a sign of the positive personal relationship that had developed between the two leaders during the latter's trip to South America.<sup>394</sup>

Frondizi wasted little time in getting his point across. Upon his arrival at Uplands Airport in Ottawa on November 27<sup>th</sup> 1961, he stated that the timing of his visit, "is not just a mere coincidence. World affairs in this era are based on an increasing interdependence between peoples."<sup>395</sup> The message was clear, the time had come for Canada to acknowledge its place in inter-American relations and join the OAS.

Diefenbaker left a lasting impression on the Argentinean leader who, as he was leaving, sent Diefenbaker a telegram which stated, "I am taking with me the best possible impression of my visit to Canada. I am convinced that the conversations we had in a climate of frank and cordial friendship will help the cause of the peoples of the Americas to which Canada and Argentina are firmly bound."<sup>396</sup>

Unfortunately for Frondizi, Diefenbaker had by this time begun to change his mind about membership in the OAS. Yet, on account of Frondizi's influence,

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<sup>393</sup> "Press Release" Office of the Prime Minister, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Unnumbered Correspondence Series, Vol. 134, File A691, 110805.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 110806.

<sup>395</sup> Arturo Frondizi, "Statement by his excellency President Arturo Frondizi of Argentina upon his arrival at Uplands Airport, Ottawa", November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, Vol. 561, File A691.1,427324.

<sup>396</sup> Arturo Frondizi, "Telegram from Gander, Newfoundland" December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, Vol. 561, File A691.1, 427320.

Diefenbaker refused to rule out the possibility. He wrote that although Frondizi thought it was of great importance that Canada join the organization, a decision on membership would probably require further examination.<sup>397</sup>

By 1962 two events in Latin America effectively change Diefenbaker's mind. First, the OAS suspended Cuba on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1962, a move that could be traced to US pressure and brought US policy into conflict with Canada's. Secondly, the arrest of Frondizi in late March 1962 by the Argentine military, removed one of Diefenbaker's closest Latin American allies. The suspension of Cuba made clear the potential for Canadian-US conflict if Canada joined the organization. Viewing Kennedy as a dangerous leader, Diefenbaker began to think that joining the OAS was not in Canada's best interests.

The second event, the arrest of Frondizi, was precipitated by the President's decision to allow Peronists to run in the March 18<sup>th</sup> congressional elections. When the Peronists achieved electoral success, the armed forces demanded his resignation. Frondizi's successor was José María Guido, who nullified the election and quickly moved Argentina back into the geo-political orbit of the United States.<sup>398</sup> The prospect of Canadian membership in the OAS now began to fade.

During Diefenbaker's seven years in power, the pressure emanating from Latin America on Canada to join the OAS was not matched by Canadian domestic pressure to join. If it had been, it is likely that despite the rift with Kennedy, Diefenbaker would have brought Canada into the organization decades before Canadian Prime Minister

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<sup>397</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, "Suggested reply to possible question on the Canadian membership in the light of President Frondizi's recent visit," December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047522.

<sup>398</sup> "Notes on Argentina," August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1962. DCCA, Prime Minister's Office Series, Vol. 570, File A691, 433226-7.

Brian Mulroney did. As was the case in so many other instances, without a strong base of domestic support, Diefenbaker was loath to make major commitments.

Initially, there was little public interest in Canada in the OAS. Though Diefenbaker did receive some correspondence from interested parties, it totalled less than 50 letters between 1957 and 1960.<sup>399</sup> Diefenbaker's visit to Mexico, however, succeeded in raising public awareness of Latin America a little, an important first step.<sup>400</sup>

Upon his return from Mexico, Diefenbaker attempted to prepare the public for a more dynamic Latin American policy and possible membership in the organization. In a speech to the House of Commons he stated that there were "no basic differences in our [Mexico's and Canada's] approach to world problems"; "there remained", he continued, "both a place and a necessity for consultations at a high level with political leaders not only of countries associated with Canada by tradition and alliance, but those of all other states whose similarities in background, outlook and interests are bringing them closer to us."<sup>401</sup>

At first, what public awareness existed in Canada seemed to be in favour of joining; however, this dramatically changed with Kennedy's visit to Ottawa in 1961. Following the visit and Kennedy's publicly expressed hope that Canada would join the organization, Diefenbaker's correspondence took on a strong anti-OAS tone.<sup>402</sup> The

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<sup>399</sup> "Survey of Public Correspondence Regarding Canadian Membership in the Organization of American States" Memorandum for the Minister. DCC, Box 572 P.M.O. Series, Vol. 890 Organization of American States – General 1960-1962, 434296.

<sup>400</sup> Globe and Mail April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, 2. Toronto Star, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960, 3. Leader Post, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1960, 18.

<sup>401</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, "Statement by Prime Minister on visit to Mexico," House of Commons Debates, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960, 3224.

<sup>402</sup> "Survey of Public Correspondence Regarding Canadian Membership in the Organization of American States," Memorandum for the Minister. DCC, Box 572 P.M.O. Series, Vol. 890 Organization of American States – General 1960-1962, 434296.

same trend held true for newspaper editorials.<sup>403</sup> It was even reflected in French Canada where there existed a more favourable view of Latin America.<sup>404</sup>

For the most part the Canadian public was not particularly knowledgeable about Latin America. This remained the case throughout Diefenbaker's time as Prime Minister. There was, however, a powerful groundswell of anti-Americanism into which Diefenbaker had generally tapped to win his parliamentary majority, and which turned public opinion on the OAS. The majority of those who took the time to write to Diefenbaker or make their opinions known in the press believed that Canada must not join if it looked like the nation was doing so at the specific request of the US. As sensitive to public opinion as any politician, Diefenbaker was not prepared to ignore it in this instance.

Kennedy was immensely popular in Canada, particularly after his strong stand in the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was as popular north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as he was south of it, for all the same reasons — his youth, energy and vision. In fact, more than one historian has argued that it was Kennedy's support for Pearson (whether real or perceived) that turned the election in 1963 against Diefenbaker.<sup>405</sup> But Kennedy's popularity did not extend to public support for every position that he was taking on foreign policy questions. His expressed desire that Canada join the OAS was one of these. Diefenbaker was prepared to move Canadian forces to a higher alert status during the Cuban Missile Crisis and to add Canadian strategic goods to the US embargo against

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<sup>403</sup> "Canadian Membership in the O.A.S. Public Opinion Trends" Memorandum for the Minister. DCC, Box 572 P.M.O. Series, Vol. 890 Organization of American States – General 1960-1962, 434259.

<sup>404</sup> "French Canadian attitude towards Canada and the Organization of American States" Memorandum from the Latin American Division to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs. DCC, Box 572 P.M.O. Series, Vol. 890 Organization of American States – General 1960-1962, 434280.

<sup>405</sup> See Gerald Craig, The United States and Canada (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), 254.

Cuba but where the Canadian public was telling him that US policies were detrimental to Canada's national interest, he listened to it rather than to Washington. There was a simple-mindedness to Peter Newman's assertion that Diefenbaker "tried to respond to every gust of public opinion."<sup>406</sup> Diefenbaker simply believed that the public did have an understanding of what was conducive to the furtherance of the Canadian national interest.

In addition to Canadian public opinion, Diefenbaker was also influenced by the views of his Cabinet. How these views evolved over time help explain the positions that he took towards the question of OAS membership. In 1957, the Cabinet was unanimously of the view that Canada should stay outside the organization. Diefenbaker's own position was that membership was an idea whose time had not yet come.<sup>407</sup> However, when he began to rethink his policy, he found that Cabinet support was split.<sup>408</sup> Believing strongly that there had to be a consensus in Cabinet before the government could act, he declined to move forward.

The situation resolved itself with Kennedy's visit to Ottawa in 1961. During his address to Parliament the President, with no notice to Diefenbaker, publicly called upon Canada to join the organization. Diefenbaker was furious. Kennedy's reiteration of his public call in a private meeting with Diefenbaker only made matters worse. He later informed the Cabinet that in response he had told Kennedy that "in light of the unsettling events in Cuba, Guatemala, Ecuador, Brazil and British Guiana ... Canada was not

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<sup>406</sup> Newman, *Renegade in Power*, xiii.

<sup>407</sup> "Organization of American States; possible Canadian membership" Cabinet Conclusion, August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1957. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1893, 2-3.

<sup>408</sup> Transcribed Oral Interview of Howard Green by Jack Granatstein. Produced by the York University's Institute for Behavioural Research, copy in the Vancouver City Archives, Howard Green Papers, Box MSS 903, Volume 605 D-1, File 2, 39.

prepared to become a full member at this time.”<sup>409</sup> Diefenbaker had the full support of his Cabinet, although Howard Green argued that the possibility might yet be explored.

The truth is that Green found himself increasingly isolated on the issue as there was now growing opposition among the Ministers. During the Cabinet discussion of Canadian participation in the OAS’s Inter-American Economic and Social Council the strong feeling against membership was evident. Green recommended that the Canadian delegation informally mention that the question of Canada joining the OAS was under active consideration.<sup>410</sup> But the Cabinet disagreed and decided that “no indication be given that Canada would join the Organization of American States.”<sup>411</sup>

Diefenbaker was undoubtedly influenced by Howard Green, the strongest proponent of the idea among his Ministers, particularly when he began to rethink his position. Green’s views were shaped by the belief that the Latin American nations could serve as a strong voting bloc in the UN, by the talk of the creation of a Latin American free trade area, and by his own experiences in Latin America.<sup>412</sup> He also had similar ideas to Diefenbaker’s regarding what policies were in Canada’s national interest.<sup>413</sup>

Yet in the end, it seemed to be the pressure applied by the US that was decisive in turning Diefenbaker against the idea of OAS membership for Canada. More particularly, it was Kennedy’s overt attempts in both public and private to pressure Diefenbaker that ultimately changed his mind on the issue. He was not driven by anti-Americanism. He

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<sup>409</sup> “Organization of American States – Canadian Position,” Cabinet Conclusion, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1961. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6176, 2.

<sup>410</sup> “Inter-American Economic and Social Council of the Organization of American States – Ministerial Meeting,” Cabinet Conclusion, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1961. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, 5.

<sup>411</sup> “Inter-American Economic and Social Council of the Organization of American States – Ministerial Meeting,” Cabinet Conclusion, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1961. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6177, 6.

<sup>412</sup> John Hilliker and Donald Barry, Canada’s Department of External Affairs. Volume 2: Coming of Age, 1946-1968 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 174.

<sup>413</sup> H. Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker’s World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 98.



did not reject membership simply because the US requested it. Washington had been requesting it for nearly two decades so Kennedy's request in 1961 was hardly new. Rather, it was the distasteful manner in which the request was made by Kennedy and its subsequent effect on Canadian public opinion that determined the outcome.

As historians have observed at length, the personal relationship between Kennedy and Diefenbaker had, of course, come to be problematic. Kennedy had taken office as President of the US on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961, and his relationship with Diefenbaker actually began on a positive note. After he met with Diefenbaker in Washington, he stated that he, "liked the Prime Minister and that he gained the impression that he would be on his side on really important issues."<sup>414</sup> He could not have been more wrong. The two would soon clash over a number of issues.

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1961, Kennedy officially announced his Alliance for Progress, a US-sponsored program designed to assist Latin American nations. In fact the program was intended to counter the growing appeal of Fidel Castro and revolutionary politics in the region; it involved funneling billions of dollars into Latin America through a variety of multinational programs. The program was initially well received by many Latin American nations and the final details were to be worked out later that year at the next meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council in Punta del Este, Uruguay. The announcement precipitated a general drop in the antagonism between the US and Latin America, and it threatened to render Diefenbaker's vision of Canada acting to mitigate the influence of the US in the region irrelevant.

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<sup>414</sup> Edelgard Mahant, Graeme Mount, Invisible and Inaudible in Washington: American Policies toward Canada (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 46-47.

A few months after the announcement, Kennedy visited Canada to meet with Diefenbaker. During the visit a member of the Kennedy staff dropped a memo into a waste basket that was later found and given to Diefenbaker. An offending line in the memo read: “What we want from the Ottawa Trip.” There were two primary goals:

1. To push Canada towards an increased commitment to the Alliance for Progress;
2. To push Canada towards a decision to join the OAS.<sup>415</sup>

Kennedy next sought to pressure Diefenbaker by proposing in Parliament that Canada join the O.A.S.<sup>416</sup>

Following these events, Diefenbaker’s attitude toward Canadian involvement with the OAS began to harden. Still angry about the lack of respect shown by Kennedy during the visit, he later announced that he had told Kennedy that Canada would not be joining the OAS.<sup>417</sup> Canada, moreover, was not prepared to make a commitment to the Alliance for Progress.<sup>418</sup>

If there were any lingering doubts about the government’s position on the OAS, they were erased by the events of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Diefenbaker was deeply offended at being left out of the decision-making process and being informed of the nuclear weapons in Cuba only hours before Kennedy’s public announcement<sup>419</sup>

Kennedy’s reaction to Canadian actions during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the pressure from Washington to accept nuclear weapons demonstrated conclusively to

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<sup>415</sup> “Memorandum to the President”, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 85, File 113, 059784.

<sup>416</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Address of John F. Kennedy, President of the United States of America to the Members of the Senate and the House of Commons and the General Public,” House of Commons, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961, 4961-7.

<sup>417</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, “Organization of American States – Canadian position,” Cabinet Conclusion, April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1961. N.A.C, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 6176, 2.

<sup>418</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Years of Achievement, 184.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

Diefenbaker that it was very difficult for Canada to navigate a line between Latin American and US interests. The primary argument against Canadian membership in the OAS, that Canada could become caught between the US and Latin America, was now overwhelming. Membership had perhaps been a possibility when Diefenbaker's good friend "Ike" was President but certainly not with the young, brash Kennedy. Thus, Diefenbaker's view of membership in the OAS had come full circle.

Diefenbaker's handling of the OAS question has often been used to demonstrate his inability to follow through on a policy objective, or to illustrate the depths of his anti-Americanism. The former explanation is inaccurate and the latter is overly simplistic. US actions and pressure may have played a pivotal role in Diefenbaker's decisions with regard to the OAS but it was not an anti-American bias that determined his position. Kennedy's insensitivity on the issue infuriated him, but he had already decided that it was not in Canada's interests to pursue this initiative. When it appeared that membership would be advantageous to Canada and would open more opportunities for Canadian trade and political influence in Latin America, Diefenbaker began to contemplate it. But when it became apparent that Canada would be placed in an awkward position where, in certain instances, it would have to decide between supporting the leader of the western world and countries with which it strongly wanted to conduct business, he rejected the idea.

## CHAPTER 6 DIEFENBAKER AND BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA

The approach taken by Diefenbaker towards Latin America was not based on a specific, coherent policy that encompassed the region as a whole. Rather he reacted to crises and opportunities and was guided by his personal instincts and his conceptualization of Canada's national interest, in particular the interest of achieving greater autonomy for Canada in foreign policy. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his policies towards Brazil and Argentina. Any reasonable Latin American policy would need to take into account two of the region's largest and most influential countries, yet Diefenbaker did not take the initiative to try to build strong connections with them. Instead he reacted belatedly to economic and political overtures from both countries which saw themselves as potential markets for Canadian goods.

The importance of Diefenbaker's relationship to Brazil and Argentina and how it completes the picture of his government's Latin American policies has been completely overlooked by historians. The reason for this omission is a general dearth of studies on Canadian-Argentine and Canadian-Brazilian relations.<sup>420</sup> Additionally, there is virtually no mention of either country in the literature on Diefenbaker. It is quite literally a blank slate.

Diefenbaker had little knowledge of Argentina and Brazil prior to his victory in the 1957 federal elections. It was not until a year later, in 1958, that Canadian connections to both nations came to his attention. Both Brazil and Argentina provided

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<sup>420</sup> The exceptions to this are a handful of studies examining immigrant experiences in Brazil and Canada as well as the economic comparative study by Carl E. Solberg, *The Pampas and the Prairies: Agrarian Policy in Argentina and Canada, 1880-1930* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1987).

the sort of economic and political opportunities to expand Canadian influence that so often attracted Diefenbaker to Latin America.

### **Brazil**

The first political connections between the Diefenbaker government and the government of Brazil were made in the summer of 1958. The Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference of 1958 was held in Rio de Janeiro and Ernest J. Broome was the Canadian representative. While there he spent considerable time investigating Canadian-Brazilian relations. He subsequently sent Diefenbaker a detailed report of his visit and observations.<sup>421</sup>

In his report Broome emphasized that the Brazilian representatives he encountered thought that Brazil had a “special affinity” with Canada. This, he believed, was based on three factors. First, Brazil was a “Portuguese island in a Spanish sea” and therefore had to fight to maintain its culture, just as Canada did with the US. Second, both had large unexplored areas that were rich in natural resources. Broome pointed out that “as we have our unknown North so do they have a practically unknown interior.” Third, Brazilians considered Canada to be a mitigating force against the US.<sup>422</sup> Broome also said that Brazil was trying to lessen its dependency on the US and that this attempt had created a golden opportunity for Canada.<sup>423</sup>

Broome’s report coincided with Diefenbaker’s announcement that he intended to shift 15% of Canada’s trade from the US to Great Britain. Though the practical impossibility of this goal was quickly pointed out to the Prime Minister, the intention was

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<sup>421</sup> “Letter from Ernest J. Broome to John G. Diefenbaker,” August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series VI, Volume 2, File# Inter-Parl/B827, 001118-24.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 001118-24.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 0011121.

clear. Diefenbaker was looking to mitigate the huge economic and political influence of the US on Canada. Broome's report that Brazil was in a similar situation and seeking Canadian assistance was very well received.

Broome's point was driven home a few months later by Sidney Smith. As mentioned in previous chapters, Smith had embarked on a Latin American tour and had included a stop in Rio de Janeiro, where he had the opportunity to meet with Brazilian President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira. In his report to Diefenbaker he echoed many of Broome's conclusions, including the possibilities of increasing Canadian trade to the region and remarked about the high esteem in which Canada was held in by many Brazilians.

The Brazilian government attempted to make a positive impression on Smith, including putting the new presidential airplane at his disposal to fly him between Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and Sao Paulo.<sup>424</sup> Their efforts succeeded and Smith left with the belief that the Canadian and Brazilian governments had much in common and that, in the case of the UN, their delegations should work more closely together.<sup>425</sup> He also believed that the Brazilian leaders felt well disposed to Canada and that the two countries shared a similar view of the US.

Perhaps the most encouraging part of Smith's visit was the luncheon that he had with President Kubitschek, and he wrote a separate memorandum to Diefenbaker detailing their discussion.<sup>426</sup> Kubitschek began by drawing a connection between

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<sup>424</sup> "Letter from Sidney Smith to John G. Diefenbaker," December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series, Series VI, Volume 551, File# 419108.

<sup>425</sup> "Letter from Sidney Smith to John G. Diefenbaker," December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series, Series VI, Volume 551, File# 419108.

<sup>426</sup> "Memorandum of a Conversation with President Kubitschek at Luncheon at Laranjeiras Palace," November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series XII, Volume 19, File# A/539, 012452-4.

himself and Diefenbaker, pointing out that both leaders were the grandsons of immigrants and now were the leaders of their countries.<sup>427</sup> He added that he had once spent a full week in Canada. Speaking about world politics, he expressed his deep concern about the “economic infiltration of the USSR in countries that are under-developed.”<sup>428</sup>

These comments would likely have struck a chord with Diefenbaker. Kubitscheck’s reference to the leaders’ shared immigrant experience was exactly the type of attention to detail that Diefenbaker loved. Diefenbaker was also deeply concerned about the Soviet Union and its infiltration in Latin America. Finally he would have been impressed that Kubitscheck had some knowledge of Canada. It was clear that the Brazilian leader left a positive impression with Smith, who told Diefenbaker: “I was greatly impressed with this hard working and clear thinking leader.” At the end of their conversation Kubitscheck looked Smith in the eye and said, “Do you know, I like you.”<sup>429</sup>

The Brazilian government followed up this promising beginning by sending its foreign minister, Horacio Lafer, to Ottawa to visit Diefenbaker in March, 1960. This was at the time when Diefenbaker’s interest in joining the OAS was at its peak and the two talked about it at length.<sup>430</sup> Lafer indicated to Diefenbaker that he was “particularly impressed by the clear understanding that you have shown of the problems connected with the relations of Canada and the Hemispheric nations.”<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid., 012452

<sup>428</sup> “Memorandum of a Conversation with President Kubitschek at Luncheon at Laranjeiras Palace,” November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series XII, Volume 19, File# A/539, 012453-4.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 012454.

<sup>430</sup> “Letter from Horacio Lafer to John G. Diefenbaker”, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Series VI, Volume 570, File# 864/B827, 427470.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 427470.

Diefenbaker's interest in Brazil was obvious. Yet when the prospect of achieving a strong Canadian presence in Latin America's largest (both in population and land mass) country was present, Diefenbaker failed to create a systematic plan to achieve this goal. Rather, as discussed below, he continued to rely on personal interventions on issues to strengthen economic and political ties between the two countries.

Lafer's visit to Canada was followed a year later by the visit from Sevigny to Brazil. By then, the political situation in Brazil had begun to get more complicated. Jânio de Silva Quadros was elected President in 1960, replacing Kubitschek. Quadros immediately began to chart an independent foreign policy.<sup>432</sup> Though this appealed to Diefenbaker, as did Quadros's desire to promote trade between Canada and Brazil, the new President unexpectedly resigned shortly after his victory and his replacement, João Belchior Marques Goulart, was suspected of having communist sympathies.<sup>433</sup>

Sevigny's report contained none of the enthusiasm for Brazil that Broome's or Smith's did. Although he supported a greater Canadian involvement in the OAS, he saw Brazil as being controlled by the military and further stated that "democracy as we know it and understand it in North America is not the same form of democracy which is understood by the Latin American nations."<sup>434</sup>

This sort of misperception, that the people of Latin do did not understand "real" democracy, has often coloured Canadian perceptions of Latin America. The belief that somehow, Latin American nations are simply not developed enough to properly create a functioning democracy subtly influenced Canadian foreign relations with the region for

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<sup>432</sup> Thomas E. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 199.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

<sup>434</sup> "Memorandum concerning my recent trip to South America", August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series XII, Volume 69, File# C/323, 047509-15.



decades following the end of the Second World War. Ironically, the tendency towards “caudilloism” in Latin America worked to the benefit of Canada during Diefenbaker’s time. The strong focus on the leader meant that real change was much more likely to occur as a result of one-on-one meetings between leaders. Diefenbaker, of course, preferred this type of direct, personal diplomacy and many of his Latin American policies grew from his meetings with foreign leaders.

This type of personal diplomacy had both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, when power was centralized and decisions were made between two people with the authority to implement them, results occurred much faster. However, there were two distinct disadvantages to this approach as well. First, when it was just two people involved in the discussion, for example, Diefenbaker and Kubitschek, nuances could be discussed and understood as when the two leaders decided to increase trade but there was plenty of minutia that still needed to be negotiated by the respective bureaucracies; this often did not occur. Second, and particularly importantly for Latin America, if there was a leadership change, then the building of personal connections would have to start all over again. In Latin America this situation occurred with both Brazil and Argentina.

Sevigny was not the only member of the Canadian delegation to the Punta del Este Conference; he was accompanied by Macquarrie, among several others. As mentioned earlier, Macquarrie wrote to Diefenbaker following the Conference and mentioned a brief encounter he had with a member of the Brazilian House of Representatives.<sup>435</sup> The Brazilian told Macquarrie that he admired Diefenbaker for two

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<sup>435</sup> “Letter from Heath Macquarrie to John G. Diefenbaker”, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series XII, Volume 37, File# B210, 434458-9.

reasons — his Baptist religion and his independence in foreign policy.<sup>436</sup> Macquarrie advised Diefenbaker that he should visit Latin America because he thought it could “bring about untold good in our relations with these key countries.”<sup>437</sup> Diefenbaker would follow this advice, traveling a few months later to Mexico. There would be, however, no more diplomatic exchanges between Canada and Brazil after Kubitschek was replaced.

In addition to the political overtures, Diefenbaker also tried to increase trade relations with Brazil by directly intervening in the process when he could. As with most of his Latin American policy, these interventions mainly involved support for pro-Brazilian motions during Cabinet meetings. In early 1958, the Cabinet discussed the possibility of offering tariff incentives to Brazil, as well as support for the sale of wheat and credit insurance for the sale of steel rails.<sup>438</sup> The sale of wheat would in fact go forward and Cabinet authorized insurance for 50,000 tons of wheat a few months later — a positive first step towards increasing Canada’s economic interests in Brazil.<sup>439</sup>

Of greater interest, however, was the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations with Brazil. Diefenbaker took an interest in the proceedings and recommended that Brazil be offered the same GATT terms as Poland.<sup>440</sup> This is of note for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrated that Diefenbaker was interested in

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<sup>436</sup> Letter from Heath Macquarrie to John G. Diefenbaker”, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series XII, Volume 37, File# B210, 434458-9.

<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 434458-9.

<sup>438</sup> “G.A.T.T. tariff negotiations with Brazil,” Cabinet Conclusion, 1958/02/11. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 1898, 4-5; “Wheat credit for Brazil,” Cabinet Conclusion, 1968/04/09. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 1898, 12; “Sale of steel rails to Brazil. Export Credits Insurance Corporation contract of insurance with Associated Metals and Minerals Corporation (Canada) Limited”, RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 1898, 10.

<sup>439</sup> “Wheat sake to Brazil on credit,” Cabinet Conclusion, 1958/06/27. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 1898, p4-5.

<sup>440</sup> “G.A.T.T. tariff negotiations with Brazil,” Cabinet Conclusions, 1959/03/24. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 2744, p11-12.

improving Canadian-Brazilian relations. And second, the country that he selected as the model for building the Canada-Brazil trading relationship was communist.

Diefenbaker received much criticism for his decision to maintain relations with communist Cuba and he consistently defended himself by arguing that the Canadian government could not cut off relations with another country simply because it did not like its political system.<sup>441</sup> Maintaining a trading relationship with Poland was a perfect example of his reasoning. Not only did Canada trade with this communist country — a practice that in fact predated the Diefenbaker government — but the tariff concessions it enjoyed were more generous than the ones made to a non-communist country, Brazil.

When the possibility of the sale of Canadian wheat to Brazil arose, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, Gordon Churchill, proposed to the Cabinet that the Canadian Exports Credit Insurance Corporation be authorized to cover the shipments under the same terms as it did for wheat purchased by Poland.<sup>442</sup> Cabinet agreed with Churchill's recommendation and approved the measure.<sup>443</sup>

Churchill would play an important role in influencing Diefenbaker's attempts to expand Canada's trade with Latin America. He was a close confidant, having supported Diefenbaker during the 1956 Progressive Conservative leadership convention and he had been a key manager of Diefenbaker's 1957 election campaign.<sup>444</sup> Diefenbaker appointed him because he felt he needed a "strong minister" in Trade and Commerce.<sup>445</sup> Churchill

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<sup>441</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker. The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962 (Macmillian Company of Canada: Toronto, 1976), 173.

<sup>442</sup> "Wheat; sale to Brazil on credit" Cabinet Conclusion, 1958/06/27. RG 2, Series a-5A, Volume 1898, 4-5.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>444</sup> Denis Smith, Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto: MacFarlane Walter and Ross, 1995), 205, 208.

<sup>445</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, One Canada. Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker: The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962 (Toronto: Macmillian of Canada, 1976), 44.

was, according to Diefenbaker, “the one minister who never failed to tell me frankly his views. When Churchill disagreed, I reconsidered.”<sup>446</sup> In the case of Latin America, there was no disagreement between Churchill and Diefenbaker, as both sought to expand Canada’s economic presence and the former reinforced Diefenbaker’s own views on the region.

In the summer of 1958 the Brazilian government attempted to purchase steel rails from the Algoma Steel Company and Churchill suggested that the Export Credits Insurance Corporation extend its coverage to the deal.<sup>447</sup> The contract was for more than the Corporation would normally insure but after carefully examining the sale, Churchill felt that the contract would be a boon to the Canadian steel industry.<sup>448</sup> Once again, Cabinet approved the sale.

The Brazilian government continued to pursue the possibility of purchasing Canadian wheat. In August, 1961, it submitted a detailed set of inquiries that seemed to indicate an imminent request to purchase.<sup>449</sup> The memorandum was sent to Diefenbaker by the Minister of Agriculture, Alvin Hamilton, who also informed him that the new Brazilian Ambassador, Sette Camara, had been personally instructed by the new President Quadros, to promote the expansion of Canadian/Brazilian trade.<sup>450</sup>

However, the possibilities of expanding Canada-Brazil political relations were soon dealt a blow when the political situation in Brazil changed and first Kubitschek,

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<sup>446</sup> Diefenbaker, 44.

<sup>447</sup> “Sale of steel rails to Brazil; Export Credits Insurance Corporation contract of insurance with Associated Metals and Minerals Corporation (Canada) Limited,” Cabinet Conclusion, 1958/06/24. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 1898, 10.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>449</sup> Memorandum, Questions from Brazilian Charge d’Affairs Miranda e Silva on Canadian Wheat”, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 560, File 864-B827, 433324-5.

<sup>450</sup> “Letter from Alvin Hamilton to John G. Diefenbaker,” September 13<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 560, File 864-B827, 433322-3.

then Quadros, left office. This in turn led to divisions in Diefenbaker's Cabinet concerning the question of Brazil's credit status.<sup>451</sup> The first such questions arose concerning the purchase of Canadian locomotives by the Brazilian government. In the end, the decision was made to offer credit support to the purchase particularly in light of the 250,000 man hours of employment that would be generated in Canada.<sup>452</sup> Another purchase of locomotives by the Brazilian government brought out a sharp divide in the Cabinet between those who favored expansion into Latin America (Diefenbaker, Green, Churchill and the latter's successor at Trade and Commerce, George Hees) and those who opposed it. The group in opposition was led by Donald Fleming, the Minister of Finance, who argued that the Brazilian government was "not all that stable and now subject to Communist influence."<sup>453</sup> Those who opposed Fleming argued that Canada "was in as good a position extending export credits covering sales to Brazil as to China and Poland."<sup>454</sup> In the end, Diefenbaker's view carried the day.

It was a sign of Diefenbaker's determination to push the expansion of Canadian trade into Latin America that Fleming, his Finance Minister, opposed the various Cabinet decisions that sought to develop economic relations with the region. Fleming was close to Diefenbaker, and the Prime Minister described him as "highly competent" and an "extraordinarily good Finance Minister."<sup>455</sup> His objections had more to do with a strong

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<sup>451</sup> "Export Financing; sale of locomotives to Brazil," Cabinet Conclusion, 1961/07/31. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 6177, 6-7.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>453</sup> "Export Credits Insurance Corporation; financing for the sale of General Motors diesel locomotives to Brazil," Cabinet Conclusion, 1961/10/18. RG 2, Series a-5-A, Volume 6177,4-5.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*,4-5.

<sup>455</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada Vol. 2: The Years of Achievement, 41.

distrust of the capabilities and stability of Latin American governments than with the idea of expanding trade to Latin America.<sup>456</sup> Still, Diefenbaker opposed him.

The split in Diefenbaker's Cabinet was evident at the next Cabinet meeting when final approval of the locomotive sale was discussed. Fleming stated simply that "the credit arrangements were hardly justified"; he was rebutted with the observation that "Brazil had come through its constitutional crisis reasonably well."<sup>457</sup> This was a reference to the elevation of João Belchior Marques Goulart to the Brazilian Presidency, the compromise solution between the military, congress and Goulart that ended a potential political crisis. In the Cabinet debate, Fleming's objections were overcome and final approval was granted.

Diefenbaker consistently supported the various commercial requests before Cabinet in the hope that they would increase Canadian trade in the region. He considered them items that he could deal with personally, rather than matters where the government could formulate an overarching economic policy or plan. In virtually all cases, the Cabinet approved measures that increased trade with Latin American countries.

A strong influence on Diefenbaker's Brazilian policies was Henry Borden, the President of Brazilian Traction, a Canadian telephone company operating in Brazil. Borden was a lawyer and former civil servant, having served as chairman of the War Times Industry Control Board under C.D. Howe during the Second World War. And he was a Conservative Party fund-raiser. In 1957 Diefenbaker appointed him the Chairman

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<sup>456</sup> Fleming makes repeated references to the problems that plague Latin American governments in his memoir. See Donald Fleming, So Very Near: The Political Memoirs of the Honourable Donald M. Fleming Volumes One: The Rising Years and Volume Two: The Summit Years. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985).

<sup>457</sup> Export Financing: General Motors Diesel Limited locomotives to Brazil" Cabinet Conclusion, 1961/11/30. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Volume 6177, 7-8.

of the Royal Commission on Energy.<sup>458</sup> He formed a strong relationship with Diefenbaker, addressing him as “John” and signing off as “Henry” in their correspondence regarding matters pertaining to Canadian-Brazilian relations.

Borden was president of Brazilian Traction from 1946 to 1963, one of the largest telephone companies in Brazil. In 1962, it operated 800,000 telephones, which amounted to 80% of all telephones in Brazil.<sup>459</sup> In addition, 48% of Brazilian Traction’s shares were held by Canadians, making it easily the largest Canadian company operating in Brazil.<sup>460</sup>

Borden first wrote to Diefenbaker concerning Canadian-Brazilian relations in October, 1960. He urged him to appoint a special representative to Brazil to attend the inauguration ceremonies for the new President. He pointed out that this had been done for the 1955 inauguration ceremonies and had been commented on favorably by the Brazilians; in 1951 no representative of the Canadian government had attended the ceremonies and that had left an unfavorable impression in Brazil.<sup>461</sup>

Diefenbaker responded that Canada would indeed send a representative of the Canadian Government.<sup>462</sup> He then discussed the situation with Green who agreed someone should be sent. Green told Diefenbaker that Brazil was “one of the more democratic and progressive Latin American countries, with which [Canada’s relations

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<sup>458</sup> See the *Royal Commission on Energy* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printers, 1959).

<sup>459</sup> “Memorandum on Brazilian Traction,” May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1962. DCC, Series XII, Volume 29, File #B/19, 019747-9.

<sup>460</sup> “Memorandum on Brazilian Traction,” May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1962. DCC, Series XII, Volume 29, File #B/19, 019747-9.

<sup>461</sup> “Letter from Henry Borden to John G. Diefenbaker,” October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Series VI, Volume 336, File# B827.1, 268179-80.

<sup>462</sup> “Letter from John G. Diefenbaker to Henry Borden,” October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Series VI, Volume 336, File# B827.1, p. 268178. DCC, Series VI, Volume 336, File# B827.1, 268179.

had] always been excellent.”<sup>463</sup> Inquiries from the Canadian government, however, soon revealed that the new President did not want any “special Ambassadors” at the inaugural ceremonies.<sup>464</sup>

For Diefenbaker Borden often acted as a personal source of information about Brazil. The Prime Minister was fond of using non-traditional sources to keep him informed of foreign affairs and welcomed Borden’s information.<sup>465</sup> In one letter Borden advised him that Brazil was interested in a number of goods from Canada, including wheat and fishing boats, as well as stronger cultural exchanges and a general intensification of trade between the two countries.<sup>466</sup> He also explained that Brazilian President Quadros had hinted that he planned to travel to Canada in December of 1961. Borden suggested that if a formal invitation had not already been sent to the President, then it should be.<sup>467</sup>

It is likely that had he not unexpectedly resigned in September, 1961, Quadros would have made a trip to Ottawa. His resignation occurred before a formal invitation could be extended.<sup>468</sup> In terms of strengthening Canadian-Brazilian relations this would have been an important step. The resulting political instability in Brazil, however, meant that there were now limits to what could be done. The turnover of leaders in Latin America would remain a problem for Diefenbaker, who relied on the personal

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<sup>463</sup> “Memorandum for the Prime Minister: Inauguration of Janio Quadros, President elect of Brazil, on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1961,” November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

<sup>464</sup> “Letter from Henry Borden to John G. Diefenbaker,” January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series XII, Vol. 4, File# A/65, 111829.

<sup>465</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker’s World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 39.

<sup>466</sup> “Letter from Henry Borden to John G. Diefenbaker,” August 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 121, File# 313.2.02, 102783-4.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> “Letter from John G. Diefenbaker to Henry Borden,” August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 121, File# 313.2.02, 102781.



relationships that he was able to develop with particular leaders to develop the Canada-Latin America relationship.

After this, little progress would be made in developing Canadian-Brazilian diplomatic relations but trade and commercial activity between the two countries continued to grow. Between 1960 and 1961 exports to Brazil increased from C\$19.8 million to 30.1 million while imports increased from 24.9 million to 29.1 million in the same years.<sup>469</sup> Though these were small numbers in relation to Canadian exports overall, they marked a definite step in what Diefenbaker saw as the right direction.

### **Argentina**

Diefenbaker followed many of the same policies towards Argentina as he did towards Brazil which resulted in a number of interesting parallels. These included several diplomatic missions, personal overtures to Diefenbaker by Argentine leaders, and limitations to the Canada-Argentine relationship caused by political instability in the region. Like Brazil, Argentina offered another potential, largely untapped market for the expansion of Canadian influence and Diefenbaker reacted to the individual trade opportunities that arose instead of following a specific plan that targeted the country. His focus was mainly on establishing diplomatic missions and furthering economic prospects.

Politically, Diefenbaker began to take an interest in Argentina in 1958 when he read an External Affairs report on Argentina about recent political changes in the country. The report speculated that under the new president, Dr. Arturo Frondizi, there might be a shift in emphasis away from the US-Argentine relationship.<sup>470</sup> This, of course, paralleled

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<sup>469</sup> "Notes on Brazil," August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1962. DCC, Series VIII, Volume 840/B827, 433316.

<sup>470</sup> "Election in Argentina," March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series VI, Volume 100, File# 100, p. 086102-3.

Diefenbaker's own foreign policy goals. He received a second report from Cabinet Minister Ellen Fairclough, whom he sent to Argentina as a special Canadian Ambassador to Frondizi's inauguration.<sup>471</sup>

The Argentine government had originally invited the Prime Minister to the inauguration.<sup>472</sup> He considered attending but put off making a firm decision for two weeks.<sup>473</sup> In the end he replied personally to the Argentine Ambassador to Canada, Carlos Torriani, that he was unable to attend and was sending Fairclough in his place.<sup>474</sup> The Argentine government impressed Fairclough with its friendly reception and enthusiasm, including the fact that the Canadian delegation was given a Guard of Honour and that a "tremendous crowd" saw her off at the airport.<sup>475</sup> Her report detailed a warm reception that was similar to the receptions that Diefenbaker received in other Latin American countries. They demonstrated a desire by Argentina to bring Canada into a closer relationship with the pan-American system.

Diefenbaker attempted to facilitate a meeting between himself and Frondizi in the fall of 1958. Frondizi had hinted that he would enjoy an opportunity to travel to Ottawa and Smith suggested to Diefenbaker that he be invited in connection with his trip to

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<sup>471</sup> "Inauguration of new President of Argentina, appointment of Secretary of State as Special Ambassador," Cabinet Conclusion, 1958/04/09. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Volume 1898, 12.

<sup>472</sup> "Letter from Carlos L. Torriani to Sidney Smith," March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series VI, Volume 561, File# 846/A691, 427300.

<sup>473</sup> This is inferred from the response on Diefenbaker's behalf sent by Jules Léger in which the latter explains that no decision is immediately possible. If Diefenbaker had not planned to attend then the week between the two responses would have been enough time to replay in the negative. "Letter from Jules Léger to Carlos L. Torriani," March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series VI, Volume 561, File# 846/A691, 427298-9.

<sup>474</sup> "Letter from John G. Diefenbaker to Carlos Torriani," April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series VI, Volume 561, File# 846/A691, 427296-7.

<sup>475</sup> Ellen Fairclough, "Report on Argentina," D.C.C., Prime Minister's Numbered Correspondence Series, Volume 550, File 840/A691, 419037-8. In her Memoirs, Fairclough recalls that she was also the only female representing a foreign country. See Ellen Fairclough, Saturday's Child: Memoirs of Canada's First Cabinet Minister (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 106.

Washington in January, 1959.<sup>476</sup> Diefenbaker concurred but Frondizi was forced to decline because of a tight schedule, a situation that he said he “deplored.”<sup>477</sup> They would not have the opportunity to meet until 1961.

Before this, however, there were a number of diplomatic exchanges between the Canadian and Argentine governments. First, in 1960, Howard Green included Argentina on his tour through Latin America. This was the second tour undertaken by Diefenbaker’s Secretary of State for External Affairs to Latin America and, unlike the previous Smith-led mission, the focus was on Argentina: the purpose was to represent Canada at the 150<sup>th</sup> Argentine Independence Day celebrations.

It was reflective of the growing importance of Latin America in general and Argentina in particular that Green decided to attend personally. Previously these types of invitations had brought out MPs and sometimes junior cabinet ministers. Coming so shortly after Diefenbaker’s visit to Mexico, this was a deliberate attempt to lay the foundations for a more active Canadian policy in the region.

Green was as smitten by Argentina as Fairclough had been and reported back to the House of Commons that he was “impressed” and found Argentina was very similar to Canada.<sup>478</sup> He had the opportunity to meet with Frondizi and the two discussed strengthening Canadian-Argentine relations as well as the possibility of Canada joining the OAS.<sup>479</sup> Green was one of the few representatives who attended the inauguration who received an audience with Frondizi, a reflection of the importance the new President

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<sup>476</sup> “Memorandum for the Prime Minister,” September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1958. DCC, Series VI, Volume 561, File# 846/A691.1, 427393.

<sup>477</sup> Ibid., 427367.

<sup>478</sup> “Latin America – Request for Report on Visit by Minister,” House of Commons Debates, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1960.

<sup>479</sup> “Letter from Arturo Frondizi to John G. Diefenbaker,” August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCCA, Personal and Confidential Series, Vol. 69, File 323, 047518.

attached to Canada.<sup>480</sup> In the eyes of Canada's Ambassador to Argentina, Robert Plant Bower, Green's visit was "a success from every point of view."<sup>481</sup>

Nearly one year later, Pierre Sevigny, the Associate Minister of National Defence briefly visited Argentina as part of his attendance at the Special Meeting of the Inter-America Economic and Social Council, which was held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961.<sup>482</sup> While in Argentina he became the third member of Diefenbaker's government to meet with Frondizi.

Frondizi continued to make a favourable impression on the Diefenbaker government. Sevigny called him "a remarkable man who has fully succeeded by his wisdom and inspired leadership in restoring order and prosperity in his country."<sup>483</sup> Furthermore, when Sevigny returned from his trip he reported to Diefenbaker that he was convinced of the importance of Canada joining the OAS and believed "that Canada [would] be called upon to play a major role in the necessary development of the South American Continent."<sup>484</sup>

While Sevigny was in Argentina, Frondizi gave him a four-page letter to personally deliver to Diefenbaker. In it, Frondizi urged Diefenbaker to deepen Canada's involvement in inter-American affairs.<sup>485</sup> He pointed out that Canada's foreign policy was vigorous but moderate, that it served not only Canada's interests but also the

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<sup>480</sup> Letter to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs "Minister's Visit on the Occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Argentine May Revolution," NAC, RG 25, Vol. 5033, File 1607-40 part 18, 1-2.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>482</sup> "Memorandum concerning my recent trip to South America," DCC, Series XII, Vol. 69, File# c/323, 047509-15.

<sup>483</sup> "Mr. Sevigny" House of Commons Debates, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1961, 8082.

<sup>484</sup> "Memorandum concerning my recent trip to South America," DCC, Series XII, Vol. 69, File# c/323, 047515.

<sup>485</sup> "Letter from Dr. Arturo Frondizi to John G. Diefenbaker," August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series XII, Vol. 69, File# c/323, 047518.

interests of all people in the preservation of world peace.”<sup>486</sup> Finally, he stated that Canada, because of its close connections with Europe and Latin America, could act as an intermediary between the two regions.<sup>487</sup>

These last two points would have resonated with Diefenbaker. By mid-1961, he had begun to support the views of Green who was a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament. He viewed Canadian influence on the world peace movement as an opportunity to strengthen Canada’s place in international affairs, and he also saw Canada’s role in the international system as that of a link between Europe and Latin America.

Shortly after Sevigny’s trip, the Diefenbaker government again invited Frondizi to visit and this time he accepted. He brought his wife, his foreign minister, and a number of other dignitaries with him and he traveled to Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal.<sup>488</sup> While in Ottawa he met with Diefenbaker and in Montreal, Sevigny accompanied him.<sup>489</sup> He stayed a total of three days in Canada.

During his stay, Frondizi once again emphasized the importance of Canadian-Argentine relations and his desire to strengthen them. His visit marked the first time the President of Argentina had visited Canada and he stressed that for him, it was “not intended to have just a ceremonial meaning,” rather it was to bring about closer ties between the two countries.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 047519

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 047520.

<sup>488</sup> Press Release, Office of the Prime Minister, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 134, File# 846/A691, 110805-6.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid., 110805-6.

<sup>490</sup> “Statement by his Excellency President Arutro Frondizi of Argentina upon arrival at Uplands Airport, Ottawa,” November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 561, File# 846/A691.1, 427324.

Following his visit, Frondizi informed Diefenbaker that he was leaving with “the best possible impression” and he signed his farewell note “your very affectionate friend.”<sup>491</sup> For Diefenbaker, who was being assailed at home by the media and faced a less than friendly US president, a “very affectionate friend” would have been welcome. Although Frondizi’s appeal to have Canada join the OAS had little prospect of success as long as Kennedy was pushing for it, the possibility of a closer Canadian-Argentine political and economic relationship certainly appealed to Diefenbaker.

Unfortunately, as in the case of Canadian-Brazilian relations, the ground work for a stronger Canadian-Argentine relationship was undone by domestic Argentine politics. Frondizi allowed Peronists to run in congressional elections and when they did better than expected, he lost his majority in Congress and was replaced by the military.<sup>492</sup> His replacement, Jose Maria Guido, reversed Frondizi’s foreign policy and firmly aligned Argentina with the US.<sup>493</sup> Guido’s pro-US stance effectively ended Diefenbaker’s interest in Argentina as well as Argentine overtures towards Canada.<sup>494</sup>

Diefenbaker not only sought to further Canadian-Argentine relations on a political level but also on an economic one. He followed a policy which was very similar to his Brazilian policy; he used the government to support private initiatives undertaken by Canadian firms. In Cabinet, Diefenbaker again made personal interventions on questions involving Argentina and supported Churchill’s decisions regarding trade. He consistently did this not just with Argentina but virtually all Latin American nations — in the latter half of his administration against Fleming’s advice.

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<sup>491</sup> “Telgram from Arturo Frondizi to John G. Diefenbaker,” December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1961. DCC, Series VI, Volume 561, File# 846/A691.1, 427320.

<sup>492</sup> “Notes on Argentina,” August 31<sup>st</sup>, 1962. DCC, Series VI, Volume 570, File# 864/A691, 433226.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 433226.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 433226.

The first such instance where Diefenbaker used Cabinet to promote greater Canadian-Argentine trade occurred in 1959, when the Argentina State Oil Enterprise attempted to buy 237 oil storage tanks from Sparling Tank and Manufacturing, a company based out of Toronto.<sup>495</sup> Churchill pointed out that Argentina had experienced balance of payments difficulties and had a low credit rating; however, he still believed that the request should be met.<sup>496</sup> He told Cabinet, “the government should be promoting trade and fostering ties with South America” and that “the Argentines were themselves anxious to do more business with Canada.”<sup>497</sup> Cabinet agreed and authorized the sale.

In November, 1960, Diefenbaker shuffled his Cabinet and moved Churchill to Veterans Affairs and brought George Hees to Trade and Commerce. Churchill had performed indifferently at best in his the Trade portfolio while Hees had become one of Diefenbaker’s most capable ministers.<sup>498</sup> He also echoed Diefenbaker’s attitudes towards the promotion of trade with Latin America.

There remained, however, differences in opinion within the Cabinet, with strong opposition again coming from Fleming. As mentioned with regard to Brazil, Fleming tended to oppose in principle the extension of credit protection to business ventures in Latin America. These differences became evident during a Cabinet discussion of the sale of Canadian road graders to the Argentine government.

In 1961, the Dominion Road Machinery Company was negotiating with the Argentine government for the sale of 240 Champion road graders. Hees, like Churchill before him, recommended that Cabinet approve the coverage of the sale by the Export

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<sup>495</sup> “Export Credits Insurance; application by Sparling Tank and Manufacturing Company on sale to Argentina,” Cabinet Conclusion, 1959/04/02. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Volume 2744, 6-7.

<sup>496</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>497</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>498</sup> Smith, 368.

Credit Insurance Company.<sup>499</sup> He was opposed by Fleming who argued that Argentina's credit standing was not that high and that any such agreement would set a bad precedent for future cases.<sup>500</sup> In the initial debate on the issue, Cabinet agreed to approve the coverage if the company successfully negotiated a deal with the Argentine government; in accord with Fleming's wishes, it noted that the deal was not to be seen as a precedent for future cases.<sup>501</sup>

But the issue arose again in the late spring of 1962 when Fleming wanted to stop further negotiations with Argentine officials. The contract had shifted from the Government of Argentina to the country's provincial governments and the political situation in the country had become less stable, with Frondizi being replaced by Guido.<sup>502</sup> Still, Fleming found himself in the minority. Those who opposed his views, led by Diefenbaker, Hees and Churchill, pointed out that negotiations had been taking place for some time and that there was no harm in allowing them to continue.<sup>503</sup> The best Fleming could get from the Cabinet was an agreement to re-examine the issue later.<sup>504</sup>

Two weeks later Fleming again attempted to stop the negotiations. He raised the same point, Argentine political instability, and argued that the Canadian government should wait until the situation was no longer "unsettled."<sup>505</sup> But, Fleming's view was not

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<sup>499</sup> "Export Credit Insurance; possible sale of road machinery to Argentina," Cabinet Conclusion, 1961/02/17. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Volume 6176, 5.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>502</sup> "Export financing; sale of road graders to Argentina," Cabinet Conclusion, 1962/05/12. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Volume 6192, 9-10.

<sup>503</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.



supported and Cabinet agreed to authorize the financing.<sup>506</sup> Diefenbaker's support in Cabinet was crucial in approving the previously discussed policies.

Even with the many human rights violations in Argentina and the interference of the military in the political process, it was the removal of Frondizi that was key in changing the Canadian-Argentine dynamic for Diefenbaker. The military had played a major role in Argentine politics throughout Frondizi's term as President, and human rights abuses had not stopped with his election. The fact that Diefenbaker could overlook these things once again demonstrated his unwillingness to apply Canadian values to countries outside of the Commonwealth. The focus was on increasing Canadian ties to Argentina, not on promoting Canadian values. Nor were other nations to be judged by Canadian values.

Diefenbaker's ability to overlook human rights violations, whether based on ignorance or calculation, reflected the lack of nuance in aspects of his foreign policy. Strong democratic systems in Brazil and Argentina, with a military in check, would ultimately have been of great benefit to Canada. The military establishment in Latin America was traditionally pro-US, as it received supplies, training and funding from there. If Diefenbaker was looking for nations to help counter-balance the US pull on Canada, then it made sense for him to promote freer institutions in nations like Brazil and Argentina. Yet, there is no indication that this was ever a priority for his government. Instead, Diefenbaker focused on the leaders of the day and his view of Canada's interests in the region.

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<sup>506</sup> "Export financing; road machinery for Argentina," Cabinet Conclusions, 1963/03/18. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Volume 6253, 6.

Diefenbaker was somewhat successful in his attempts to promote trade and political connections between Canada and South America's two largest countries, Argentina and Brazil. His attempts were consistent with his approach to Latin America as a whole and his desire to create greater autonomy for Canada. His policies towards Argentina and Brazil also demonstrated his refusal to judge non-commonwealth countries for their system or choice of government. Diefenbaker's policies towards the two nations were mirrored by his policies towards Cuba following the Revolution.

## CHAPTER 7 DIEFENBAKER AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1959, long time US ally and Cuban dictator, Fulgencio Batista, fled Cuba. This marked the victory of Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution. At this point Cuba began a slow movement towards communism, a movement which accelerated as relations with the US deteriorated. Eventually, relations between the Cuban and US government were completely severed and the US sought the support of its allies in its conflict with that country. Diefenbaker refused to sever relations with Cuba or join an US-led economic embargo against the island state. These decisions were entirely consistent with his Latin American policy and his desire that Canada's foreign policy be conducted so as to further Canadian national interests. His actions and policies towards Revolutionary Cuba were shaped by his personal diplomacy and by a variety of sometimes contradictory influences, including his relationship with US President Dwight D. Eisenhower, pressures by Cuba, information he received about the Revolution, the view of his Cabinet, and public opinion.

Cuba had been in the US orbit since the 1898 US victory in the Spanish-American War. Following this victory, it existed as a protectorate of the US. After an initial attempt to allow democratic elections in Cuba produced candidates deemed unacceptable by the US Administration, Washington decided to maintain a military presence on the island and reserved the right to intervene in Cuban affairs.<sup>507</sup>

Canadian commercial interests in Cuba began shortly after the Spanish-American War. The initial connections were commercial in nature as Canadian banks and businesses began to find opportunities there. The Royal Bank opened its first branch in

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<sup>507</sup> Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 103-106.

1899 and by the mid-1920s had 65 branches on the island.<sup>508</sup> It was so successful that it became, in many ways, Cuba's *de facto* central bank.<sup>509</sup> In 1906, the Bank of Nova Scotia joined the Royal Bank in Cuba.<sup>510</sup> Other commercial businesses followed and by 1949 Canadian exports to the island had increased to \$14,391,000. This was followed by a steady increase in bilateral trade throughout the 1950s.<sup>511</sup>

The expanding trade and financial relationships quickly spawned a diplomatic relationship. The first official Canadian representative in Cuba arrived in 1909 when the Department of Trade and Commerce opened an office in Havana.<sup>512</sup> Diplomatic relations between Canada and Cuba were upgraded following the Second World War when the commissioners became consuls in 1945 and this culminated in the exchange of Ambassadors in 1950.<sup>513</sup>

During the post-war years, the Liberal governments of King and Louis St. Laurent were focused mostly on improving and preventing any disruption to Canadian-Cuban trade. Very few formal connections were established. Furthermore, new or stronger connections were created usually only when there was a possible disruption in the trading relationship. For example, it was concerns over the sugar trade between Canada and Cuba in 1951 that prodded the two nations to sign their first trade agreement.<sup>514</sup> When these concerns passed, the Canadian government did not renew the treaty.

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<sup>508</sup> Duncan McDowall, Quick to the Frontier: Canada's Royal Bank (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 173.

<sup>509</sup> McDowall, 173

<sup>510</sup> John M. Kirk and Peter McKenna, Canada-Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbor Policy (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1997), 15

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-22.

<sup>512</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>514</sup> Mark Gautier, "Sleeping with the Enemy: Canada's Complex Relationship with Cuba from 1898 to 1968" (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Laurentian University, 2003), 42.

Diefenbaker initially saw little reason to alter the *laissez-faire* nature of the Canadian-Cuba relationship. However, rising tensions in Cuba soon moved the Canada-Cuba relationship from a low to a high priority item on his foreign policy agenda. Disenchantment in Cuba with the *status quo* and particularly with the rule of the US-backed dictator, Fulgencio Batista, grew steadily. Led by Fidel Castro's 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement, opposition forces eventually succeeded in overthrowing the dictator, who subsequently fled Cuba on New Year's Day, 1959. Castro emerged as the head of a new Cuban government and moved quickly to consolidate his power.

At first, there were few problems with Batista's successor. Canada and the US, as well as most of the nations of the world, quickly recognized the new Cuban government as legitimate and relations continued as before. Yet Castro rapidly wore out his welcome with the US government, as his consolidation of power coincided with mass arrests and executions. Far worse, however, was his acceptance of the Cuban Communist Party as a legitimate political entity and his slow turn towards the Soviet bloc for support.

Despite these actions and the deteriorating Cuba-US relationship, little changed in terms of the Canada-Cuba relationship during the early months of the Revolution. Canada had a history of trade with non-allied and communist nations and thus, as far as Diefenbaker was concerned, the movement of the Cuban Revolution towards Communism was not a *de facto* cause for any immediate change in the relationship.

The situation deteriorated when the Castro regime began to nationalize the means of production in Cuba.<sup>515</sup> It was the beginning of a sharp turn towards a communist economic system and presaged a confrontation with the US. Diefenbaker was both anti-

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<sup>515</sup> Jorge Domínguez, "Cuba since 1959" in *Cuba: A Short History* Leslie Bethell (ed.), (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1993), 102.

communist and a strong supporter of the US in the Cold War — thus expanding Canadian investment in Cuba appeared problematic.

In 1960, the US enacted an economic blockade of Cuba, in response to the shift in Cuban policies towards communism and the Soviet bloc, as well as the nationalization of US businesses by the Cuban government. The US expected its allies and in particular Canada, to support the blockade. Diefenbaker was now faced with a critical decision. In the end, he compromised. He moved to prevent US companies from circumventing the embargo, by shipping goods to Cuba through Canada and by agreeing to join an embargo on strategic goods. However, he refused to join the larger commercial embargo.

US President Dwight Eisenhower attempted to influence Diefenbaker's Cuban policies during the first three years of the Cuban Revolution. The manner in which this was done explains why the two leaders never had serious differences over Cuba. Diefenbaker's abiding respect for the US position during the Eisenhower presidency helps to discredit the argument that Diefenbaker was fundamentally anti-American.

He had first seen Eisenhower in person at the 1952 Republican Convention in Chicago.<sup>516</sup> He remembered how the Republicans at the convention had admired Eisenhower's opponent, Senator Robert A. Taft, but had loved Eisenhower. He had himself been swept along by the outpourings of emotion at the convention.

The two leaders formally met just over five years later during Diefenbaker's first visit to Washington in 1957. He was as impressed with Eisenhower in person as he had been on stage at the 1952 convention. There was, according to Diefenbaker, "no limit to Mr. Eisenhower's congeniality" and he left Washington with the feeling that "Canada's

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<sup>516</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada. Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker: Vol. I: The Crusading Years, 1895 to 1956, 251.

position was more clearly understood.”<sup>517</sup> They built on this promising beginning and continued to have an excellent relationship, referring to each other as “John” and “Ike” in their correspondence, until Eisenhower left office in 1960.

Eisenhower often communicated with Diefenbaker on a personal level in both meetings and through correspondence. This created in Diefenbaker feelings of personal importance and convinced him that Eisenhower took the Canada-US relationship seriously. During the Cuban Revolution, Eisenhower sought to bring Diefenbaker around to the US viewpoint with one of his personal letters, in which he stated, “We are facing a very serious situation in the Caribbean which is obviously inviting Soviet penetration of the Western Hemisphere.”<sup>518</sup> He then went on to invite Diefenbaker to express his views on the subject.

It was a telling example of the differences between the manner in which Eisenhower and his successor, John F. Kennedy, dealt with Diefenbaker. Eisenhower had a long history of dealing with diverse personalities, particularly from his time as an allied commander in the Second World War. From British General Bernard Montgomery to Free French leader Charles de Gaulle, Eisenhower was able to manage people of strong character. Diefenbaker was no exception. The invitation to Diefenbaker to express his views on the subject of Cuba was exactly the gesture that carried great weight with him. This was in direct contrast to Kennedy, who had little time for Diefenbaker or his views on international affairs. Not surprisingly, Eisenhower’s diplomacy often

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<sup>517</sup> Denis Smith, Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker (Toronto, Canada: Macfarlane Walter and Ross, 1995), 270.

<sup>518</sup> Letter from Dwight D. Eisenhower to John G. Diefenbaker,” July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Personal and Confidential Correspondence, Box 7, File 232, 004313.

resulted in Diefenbaker's wholehearted support for US initiatives, while Kennedy's diplomacy often led Diefenbaker to reject them.

The Cuban Revolution was not the first time that Eisenhower contacted Diefenbaker in advance of a planned US international initiative. In 1958, the US government sent marines into Lebanon to support the pro-US government there.<sup>519</sup> The day before, Eisenhower contacted Diefenbaker by telephone and the Prime Minister gave his full support to the mission.<sup>520</sup> Immediately following their telephone discussion Eisenhower sent Diefenbaker a letter via Livingston T. Merchant, the US Ambassador to Canada, in which he provided a more detailed summary of the US plans.<sup>521</sup> Diefenbaker then defended the US intervention to his Cabinet colleagues, informing them that Canada would support the US actions.<sup>522</sup> He defended the US action before the UN Security Council, leading Eisenhower to write: "I cannot tell you how deeply appreciative I am of your prompt and decisive support of us in the United Nations Security Council."<sup>523</sup>

During the Eisenhower years, Diefenbaker thought that Canada was treated as an important ally of the US. The two leaders held similar views on national and international security matters, and this led to close co-operation and Diefenbaker's general support of the Eisenhower Administration's foreign policy.

In fact, during this time, Diefenbaker was not entirely comfortable about what policy Canada should adopt towards Cuba. On one hand, he was a staunch Cold Warrior

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<sup>519</sup> Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 27.

<sup>520</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Vol. 2 The Years of Achievement 1956-1962* 91.

<sup>521</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Letter to John G. Diefenbaker," July 14, 1958. Diefenbaker Centre Canada, Series XII Personal and Confidential, Vol. 7, File 232, 004272-3.

<sup>522</sup> "Middle East crisis; Lebanon and Iraq; Emergency Meeting of Security Council of United Nations," Cabinet Conclusion, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1957. RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 1899, 3.

<sup>523</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Letter to John G. Diefenbaker," July 14, 1958. Diefenbaker Centre Canada, Series XII Personal and Confidential, Vol. 7, File 232, 004274.



and a firm supporter of the US in the struggle against communism.<sup>524</sup> He also had a close relationship with Eisenhower that he wished to keep. On the other hand, he believed that the US approach to Cuba was excessive and he was concerned about Canadian interests on the island, primarily business and banking.<sup>525</sup>

The position towards which he gravitated was that communist Cuba did not constitute a threat to Canada, and that to comply fully with the US embargo would harm Canadian trade and commercial interests. His Latin American policies were predicated on the hope of diversifying the Canadian economy away from its dependence on the US. In particular, he wanted to expand Canada's economic and commercial presence, and its diplomatic involvement, in the region. He was resistant to leaders in Washington who embraced the idea of pursuing an anti-communist crusade in the region. This was not a case of anti-Americanism, as has often been maintained by authors such as Newman, Granatstein and Glazov, although Diefenbaker was not above tapping into that strain when he found it in Canadian society.

Anti-American sentiment indeed enjoyed somewhat of a renaissance in Canada during the later half of the 1950s and Diefenbaker gave expression to negative feelings towards the US during both the 1957 and 1958 elections. He often saw opportunities to score political points by using anti-American rhetoric and took advantage of such situations.<sup>526</sup> However, it is important to differentiate between political rhetoric and Diefenbaker's actual beliefs. A careful examination of his private correspondence reveals

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<sup>524</sup> John M. Kirk and Peter McKenna, Canada-Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbor Policy (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997), 34.

<sup>525</sup> Robinson, 145.

<sup>526</sup> Glazov, 138.

nothing in the way of an anti-American bias and there is little evidence that he let anti-American sentiment dominate his government's foreign policy.

In fact, Diefenbaker shifted Canadian foreign policy so that it was more firmly on the side of the US on Cold War issues than the previous Liberal administrations of St. Laurent and Mackenzie King. His support for the US in fact often led to clashes with the officials of the Department of External Affairs who wished to see Canada cultivate a less aggressive position towards the Soviet Bloc.<sup>527</sup>

Another factor in Diefenbaker's refusal to sever political relations with Cuba or join the US commercial embargo was the opportunity that he believed the Cuban situation created for Canada. Canada could, by virtue of its positive relationship with both Cuba and the US, exert its influence to try and ease the tensions between the two countries. Basil Robinson reported that, as the Cuban-American relations worsened, Diefenbaker indicated that he "wanted to avoid any action that might prejudice Canada's capacity to ease the strain in US-Cuban relations."<sup>528</sup> He was loath to alienate the Cuban government and lose the leverage that Canada had with it. This was again not a policy based on an anti-American bias; it was in fact quite the opposite and in keeping with the older Liberal idea, of Canada serving as a mediator of international tensions. In Diefenbaker's view, Canada was clearly an ally of the US. But it could also play the role of a moderating force between the US and Cuba. Canada could help to move the Cuban government in directions that the United States would like to see it go. In his memoirs Diefenbaker observed that, "by maintaining normal relations with Cuba, Canada might have little opportunity to influence the course of Cuban events; by breaking diplomatic

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<sup>527</sup> Robinson, 152.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 145.

relations with Cuba, Canada would have no opportunity to influence these events at all.”<sup>529</sup>

Few contemporary analysts predicted the speed with which Cuba found itself joining the Soviet Bloc. In 1960 the fate of Cuban-American relations was hardly a foregone conclusion and Diefenbaker was not alone in believing that the relationship could be saved through the efforts of third parties. In July 1960, Mexican President Adolfo Lopez Mateos wrote to him asking that Canada join Mexico and Brazil in an effort to mediate the crisis between the US and Cuba.<sup>530</sup>

Despite Diefenbaker’s belief that Canada could be involved in such an effort, he decided to turn down the Mexican President’s offer. Diefenbaker realized that, with the US position so deeply entrenched, joint mediation, even with the involvement of other countries like Brazil, Mexico and Canada, would be unsuccessful. He also believed it would anger the US, which, was, after all, one of Canada’s closest allies.

He did not see his failure to fully support the US embargo as either an anti-American action or as support for the new Castro regime. As he wrote in 1961, “continuation of our trade relations in no way constitutes approval, overt or tacit, of the Government of Cuba nor does that action reveal any alteration in opposition to communism and its works.”<sup>531</sup> For Diefenbaker, maintaining trade with Cuba was in line with Canada’s previous policies and did not constitute a change in Canada’s support of the US in the Cold War.

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<sup>529</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Vol. 2: The Years of Achievement, 1956-1962*, 174.

<sup>530</sup> Dr. Adolfo López Mateos, “Letter to John G. Diefenbaker, July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1960,” DCC, Series XII Personal and Confidential, Vol. 9, File # 845 Cuba, 425019-20.

<sup>531</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, “Letter to Allan Swabey,” DCC, Series VI PMO Numbered Correspondence, Vol. 477, File 722/C962, 369872.

What Diefenbaker did decide to do was place limits on Canada-Cuba trade. He placed an embargo on strategic/military goods, which prevented US goods from being sold to Cuba through Canada and circumventing the embargo.<sup>532</sup> The total value of Canadian exports to Cuba actually declined from \$13,000,000 in 1960 to \$10,000,000 in 1962, thus contradicting the numerous letters, editorials and cartoons in the press that argued or implied that Canada was enriching itself through the embargo.<sup>533</sup>

Diefenbaker was aware of these criticisms and attempted to counter his critics. In a speech he delivered in 1961 he described the attitude of the Canadian government towards Cuba:

The Canadian government is as concerned as any government over the communistic trends of the Cuban government. However, Canada, while deploring the various actions and practices of the Cuban Government, has not considered such disapproval to constitute a reason for departing from the normal relations with which the Canadian Government has endeavored to maintain with various countries whose philosophies are repugnant to us.<sup>534</sup>

This was not, however, enough for one State Department official who called Canada's refusal to follow the US lead "disturbing."<sup>535</sup> US officials were sufficiently upset with Canada that when Washington severed formal relations with Cuba it refused the British suggestion that Canada represent US interests in Cuba.<sup>536</sup>

One can almost feel the sense of frustration that Diefenbaker experienced when he was forced to repeatedly explain his Cuban trade policy. Twenty years later he recalled in his memoirs that "it became rather tiresome repeating over and over that we were

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<sup>532</sup> Jamie Glazov, *Canadian Policy toward Khrushchev's Soviet Union* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 113.

<sup>533</sup> Glazov, 113.

<sup>534</sup> Howard, Green, "Letter to Mr. Robert C. Barker," DCC, Series VI PMO Numbered Correspondence, Vol. 477, File 722/C962, p. 369912.

<sup>535</sup> Edelgard Mahant, Graeme S. Mount, *Invisible and Inaudible in Washington: American Policies toward Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999), 61.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

protecting United States interests and that our motives in trading with Cuba were not simply economic opportunism.”<sup>537</sup>

One of those explanations came in the House of Commons during the 1960 winter session. Diefenbaker’s comments were succinct; “we respect the views of other nations in their relations with Cuba just as we expect that they respect our views in our relations.”<sup>538</sup> The statement defined the Canada-US relationship, from Diefenbaker’s perspective. For him it was a relationship based on mutual respect, and the unspoken corollary of respect was equality. Diefenbaker understood fully that Canada and the US were not equal in terms of military and economic power, but he believed that they were both sovereign nations whose decisions deserved equal respect. He believed that there was insufficient justification for Canada to join the US-led boycott, and that joining it would be possible only if Canadian interests would not be harmed.<sup>539</sup> His conclusion was that a boycott would negatively affect Canadian business and banking interests in Cuba. He also believed that, “the diplomatic ostracizing of Cuba by the Western powers could serve only to eliminate her options and drive her into the Soviet orbit.”<sup>540</sup>

Officials in the State Department and other US governmental agencies were not impressed by Diefenbaker’s position or justifications. This was the situation when Eisenhower’s successor, John F. Kennedy Jr., became President of the United States. The Kennedy-Diefenbaker relationship would lack the cordiality of the Eisenhower-Diefenbaker relationship, and it would be sorely tested, and found wanting, by the time of the escalation of the Cuban situation.

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<sup>537</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962, 177

<sup>538</sup> House of Commons Debates, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1960. p.700.

<sup>539</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Years of Achievement, 1957-1962, 174.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*

Diefenbaker's early policies towards revolutionary Cuba were shaped not only by his personal relationship with Eisenhower and pressures from the US government agencies but also by the actions of revolutionary Cuba itself. Castro deliberately sought to cultivate a strong relationship with Canada. He took a number of steps in this direction during the early years of the Revolution, including making a personal visit to Canada, sending trade delegations there, and finally negotiating the takeover of the Canadian banking interests in Cuba as opposed to the forced nationalization of US businesses. Diefenbaker's response to Cuba's overtures demonstrated the limits posed by the new Canadian-Cuban relationship and by his views of the Revolution.

In April, 1959, Castro visited Canada in an attempt to allay fears that Cuba was becoming communist.<sup>541</sup> He was invited by a group to visit Montreal and he hoped that this would be followed by an official visit to Ottawa to meet with Diefenbaker.<sup>542</sup> Diefenbaker hesitated to extend the invitation and then decided against it. He was uneasy about the nature of Castro's regime, having received disturbing reports from numerous sources detailing human rights abuses in Cuba, and he did not want to offend Eisenhower.<sup>543</sup>

On December 9<sup>th</sup>, 1960, the Cuban government sent an uninvited eleven-man trade delegation, including Cuba's Minister of Economic Affairs, M. Regino Boti, to Ottawa with the express purpose of increasing Canada-Cuba trade.<sup>544</sup> The delegation met with Diefenbaker's Minister of Trade and Commerce, George Hees, and discussed the

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<sup>541</sup> James Francis Rochlin, Discovering the Americas: The Evolution of Canadian Foreign Policy towards Latin America (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994), 51.

<sup>542</sup> H. Basil Robinson, Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 92.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>544</sup> Gauthier, 55.

subject of selling sugar mill equipment. Afterwards Hees publicly declared “You can’t do business with better businessmen anywhere.”<sup>545</sup>

Although Hees comments were in keeping with the letter of the government’s policy, which was to expand Canadian trade and maintain a political relationship with Cuba, they were not in keeping with its spirit, which was a reluctant, rather than a wholehearted, acceptance of Cuba’s new regime. Hees was forced to backtrack on his statements a few days later in a television broadcast and apologize for his “insensitive remarks.”<sup>546</sup> Diefenbaker attempted to make his government’s position clear in a statement he released to the media later that month regarding Canada’s trade with Cuba.

He stated:

In answer to those well intentioned people who feel that Canada should follow the course taken by the United States, I would emphasize that no other country, including each and all of the NATO allies of the United States has taken any action to impose a similar trade embargo.

Embargoes and trade controls are powerful and sometimes double edged weapons. If we use them towards Cuba we may be under pressure to use them elsewhere and unnecessary damage will be done to Canadian trade, present or prospective. As a country which lives by international trade, Canada cannot lightly resort to the weapons of a trade war.

We do not minimize American concern, but it is the Government’s view that to maintain mutually beneficial economic relations with Cuba may help to contribute to the restoration of traditional relationships between Cuba and the Western world.

Canada respects the right of every country to determine its own policy towards Cuba; we naturally expect others to respect our right to do likewise.<sup>547</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>546</sup> Kirk and McKenna, 44.

<sup>547</sup> “Trade with Cuba,” Statement issued to the Press by the Prime Minister, December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1960. DCC, Prime Minister’s Office Numbered Correspondence, Vol. 476, File 722/C962, 369076-7.

A close examination of the speech reveals no positive references to Cuba. In fact, there is no record of Diefenbaker ever praising Fidel Castro or communist Cuba and he was obviously not won over by Cuban overtures. His decision to continue trade with Cuba was a decision based primarily on the promotion of Canadian interests.

Despite the less than friendly Canadian responses to his overtures, Castro continued to promote a positive relationship with Canada. In 1960, he nationalized Cuba's banks, with the important exception of the Royal Bank and the Bank of Nova Scotia. Instead the Canadian banks sold their assets to the Cuban government in an amicable parting.<sup>548</sup> The Royal Bank maintained a representative office in Havana that served as a financial link for Cuba to the outside world.<sup>549</sup> This would later prove useful when Castro agreed to release prisoners from the abortive Bay of Pigs invasions for \$60 million, as the money was funneled through the Royal Bank.<sup>550</sup>

Castro's treatment of the Canadian banks was appreciated by Diefenbaker and strengthened his belief that his policy of maintaining relations, both diplomatic and economic, was the correct course of action. He may not have liked Castro or the Cuban Revolution, but he wanted to avoid a political crisis with Cuba that might threaten Canadian economic and commercial interests.

Another important influence on Diefenbaker was the information he was receiving on the Revolution from both official and unofficial sources. As in the case of Brazil, this facilitated his personal involvement and interest in the situation. While not particularly well informed about the political repression in other countries in Latin America, he received much information on the repression in Cuba. Most of this information came

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<sup>548</sup> McDowall, 364.

<sup>549</sup> Kirk and McKenna, 46.

<sup>550</sup> McDowall, 365.



from Canada's Ambassador to Cuba, Hector Allard, as well as unofficial sources, such as businessmen Arthur D. Margison and R. G. MacIsaac, who both traveled to the island and sent back reports.

As early as March, 1959 Allard was reporting back to the Department of External Affairs that communist influences were spreading throughout Cuba like "a cancerous growth."<sup>551</sup> In a letter to Allard's successor, Allan Anderson, in September of the same year Howard Green, expressed the belief that:

Castro shows an unwillingness to give way to the moderates and right wing elements who backed his revolution, either by slowing down his radical agrarian reform plan or by taking overt action to curtail Communist influence in his government.<sup>552</sup>

Anderson shared these concerns and his reports consistently maintained an anti-Communism and anti-Castro tone.<sup>553</sup>

Diefenbaker relied on non-Departmental sources for information on Cuba, such as Arthur D. Margison. Margison was a successful engineer and businessman who corresponded with Diefenbaker in 1960 and looked to do business in Cuba.<sup>554</sup> Before he formalized any deal with the new Castro government, Margison decided to go to Cuba and see for himself what the situation was like. Upon his return to Canada, he wrote Diefenbaker and informed him that he would not be doing business with Cuba as long as the current regime was in power.<sup>555</sup> In his letter, he pointed out that "the present

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<sup>551</sup> "Return of the Communist Party to Cuba," Letter from Hector Allard to the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1959. NAC, RG25, Vol. 7257, File #10224-40 part 5.2.

<sup>552</sup> Letter to Mr. Anderson from Howard Green, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1959. NAC, RG 25, Vol. 7257, File 10224-40 part 6.2.

<sup>553</sup> John M. Kirk and Peter McKenna, Canada-Cuba Relations: The Other Good Neighbor Policy (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 59.

<sup>554</sup> Letter from A. D. Margison to John G. Diefenbaker, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Prime Minister's Office Numbered Correspondence, Vol. 552, File 840/C962, 419876-7.

<sup>555</sup> Letter from A. D. Margison to John G. Diefenbaker, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Prime Minister's Office Numbered Correspondence, Vol. 552, File 840/C962, 419866-7.

government ministers are following a policy of complete Soviet-Union directed conversion to a communist state.”<sup>556</sup> He also stated that “it is a complete police state with Fidel Castro being converted into an image of a savior” and that “the city of Havana is a dying city” with many Russian technocrats moving in.<sup>557</sup>

Margison’s conclusions were echoed by R. G. MacIsaac, the Executive Vice-President of the insurance firm Stewart, Smith Limited. MacIsaac wrote to Diefenbaker following a visit of his own to Cuba and argued that “Castro was in the hands of the Communists and that “the U.S. was persona non-grata.”<sup>558</sup> He suggested “aggressive tactics” were necessary to deal with the threat that Cuba now posed.<sup>559</sup>

Being strongly anti-communist, Diefenbaker was deeply concerned about what was going on in Cuba, and he refused, in the end, to meet with Castro or to offer any sort of moral support for the Revolution. However, his primary concern was not with the domestic politics of other nations but rather how Canadian trade and influence in Latin America might be expanded.

In addition to the information and pressures that he was receiving from other places, Diefenbaker’s Cuban policies were influenced by domestic political considerations. Public opinion in Canada concerning the Cuban Revolution was mixed.<sup>560</sup> The Canadian public generally found it hard to disassociate their increasingly negative feelings towards the US from the questions concerning communist Cuba. In general,

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<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

<sup>557</sup> Ibid.

<sup>558</sup> Letter from R. G. MacIsaac to John G. Diefenbaker, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 1960. DCC, Prime Minister’s Office Numbered Correspondence, Vol. 552, File 840/C962, 419829-30.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., 419830.

<sup>560</sup> Based on a reading of the numerous letters sent to Diefenbaker and Canadian newspaper coverage.

Diefenbaker was on safe ground with his compromise that cut off strategic support to the Castro regime, while maintaining ongoing trade relations with Cuba.

Public opinion mattered to Diefenbaker, to whom it was an article of faith that his government had to always answer to the Canadian people. Despite his conservative beliefs, he did not share the Burkean belief that elected politicians had a better understanding of what policies were needed than the people who elected them; rather he saw himself connected to the “common man” and standing against the landed aristocrats of the Conservative party, the party’s old guard who had previously blocked his attempts to become party leader.

However, this did not mean that Diefenbaker simply followed public opinion blindly. There is little evidence, besides comments from his detractors, that he responded to the Cuban Revolution and the subsequent Cuban Missile Crisis completely in reaction to public opinion. That there was a substantial part of public opinion that supported his early decision to continue to trade with Cuba did serve to reinforce his inclination to maintain that policy, but it was only one of a number of factors that influenced him. Even his landslide election victory in 1958 did not lead him away from keeping his finger on the pulse of public opinion.

Diefenbaker was able to enjoy Cabinet support on Cuban issues for much of 1959 and 1960. The decision that he should not meet with Castro when the latter visited Canada in 1959 and the policy of preventing US firms from circumventing their government’s embargo by exporting through Canada were both noted with approval and supported by Cabinet.<sup>561</sup> However, as the Cuban government’s shift towards

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<sup>561</sup> Visit of the Prime Minister of Cuba, Dr. Fidel Castro, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Cabinet Conclusion. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2744, 6; Export of arms, Beaver aircraft to Cuba, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 1959. Cabinet

Communism grew more pronounced, divisions in the Cabinet began to appear between those who believed that Canada should maintain normalized relations with Cuba and those who felt Canada should begin to distance itself from Castro's government.<sup>562</sup>

Diefenbaker and Howard Green were among the former and the Minister of National Defense, Douglas Harkness was among the latter.<sup>563</sup> These divisions grew particularly acute during the Cuban Missile Crisis and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Diefenbaker's response to the Cuban Revolution was to try to find a middle ground between maintaining cordial relations with Cuba while not endorsing or offering support to the Castro government. Initially, Diefenbaker had felt little need to change the pre-existing relationship with Cuba, but as it became apparent that the Cuban Revolution was becoming communist, he offered little more support than the bare minimum of continued recognition. There were no aid packages or personal visits and when Castro traveled to Canada as a guest of a number of Montreal bankers, Diefenbaker refused to invite him to Ottawa, even though Castro offered to pay his own way.<sup>564</sup>

Diefenbaker's reaction to Castro's overtures was affected by his staunch anti-communist attitudes.<sup>565</sup> He gave little response when, in the heady days of the revolution, there were stories of the massive violation of the civil liberties of Cuban citizens.<sup>566</sup> Thanks to embassy reports and the accounts of Canadian businessmen in

Conclusion. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2745, 8; Cuba, trans-shipment of U.S. goods through Canada, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1960. Cabinet Conclusion. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2747, 16.

<sup>562</sup> Cuban request for civil air privileges, Cuban trade mission, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1960. Cabinet Conclusion. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2747, 7-9.

<sup>563</sup> Cuban Situation, July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1960. Cabinet Conclusion. NAC, RG 2, Series A-5-a, Vol. 2747, p. 2-3.

<sup>564</sup> H. Basil Robinson, *Diefenbaker's World: A Populist in Foreign Affairs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 92.

<sup>565</sup> Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross, 1995), 260.

<sup>566</sup> Dominguez, 105.

Cuba, Diefenbaker was well aware of both problems around civil liberties and the slide towards communism.

He could be very pragmatic, particularly when it came to promoting Canadian interests abroad. There was little reason for him to turn his back on Cuba and plenty of reasons to keep the lines of communication and trade open. The Cuban Revolution may have resulted in the violation of civil liberties but its record in that area was hardly worse than Batista's.<sup>567</sup> The Revolution may have led to a centralized communist economic system but it did not nationalize Canadian businesses. In fact, the opposite occurred with the Cuban government actively courting Canadian trade.

Diefenbaker's policies towards Cuba are almost always examined in a vacuum, with little consideration given to their place in any wider context. If, however, they are put into the larger context of his Latin American policy and Diefenbaker's desire for greater autonomy for Canada in foreign affairs, then the underlying goal of his foreign policy becomes apparent. For he sought to promote a particular concept of Canada's national interest, one that involved both cooperation with, and at times a distance from, the US. His concept of Canada's national interest was based on Canada having autonomy from the US, while being closely allied with it. At the same time, he attempted to find new areas for Canadian economic and commercial expansion in Latin America, which he hoped would mitigate the enormous influence of the US. In Canada's relationship and response to revolutionary Cuba, Diefenbaker stayed remarkably true to his foreign policy goals.

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<sup>567</sup> Bethel, 85

## CHAPTER 8 DIEFENBAKER AND THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

On October 25th, 1959, US President John F. Kennedy appeared before the world via a live televised broadcast and announced that the Soviet Union had placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. The US Navy, he said, would enforce a complete blockade of Cuba until the missiles were removed. The Soviet Union sent its own ships towards the island and a nuclear confrontation loomed. Though the US government hoped for support from its European allies, it expected the Canada government to follow its lead during the Crisis. Specifically, when US leaders proposed that the Canadian forces of NORAD be placed on heightened alert, they expected that the Canadian government would respond at once. In the event, Diefenbaker waited two days before authorizing such an alert.

Diefenbaker's decision to wait two days before agreeing to the heightened alert has been a source of unending controversy. The decision was influenced, in large part, by his determination that Canada should respond to the crisis on its own terms, that is, on the basis of the Canadian government's own assessment of the threat and how it might best be handled and a catastrophe averted. Diefenbaker's response to the crisis reflected his characteristic personal intervention in the situation for the purpose of guiding policy. The manner in which he intervened and his proposals for policy implementation reflected his own personal interpretation of the reasons for Kennedy's actions, his own perception of the Soviet threat; and his expectations of Kennedy, given his knowledge of the man and experience dealing with him. He was also influenced by domestic considerations, including a deep division within his Cabinet and public perceptions of the crisis.

The Cuban Missile Crisis originated from the new dynamic that the Cuban Revolution created in the Cold War. A confluence of factors – a new US President, a

Soviet Premier who saw much to gain in a risky foreign adventure, and a Cuban leader looking for a deterrent against possible US aggression – all combined to lead the world closer to nuclear war than it had ever been.

In 1961, Kennedy succeeded Eisenhower as President of the US and inherited a bold plan from his predecessor to arm a group of anti-Castro Cubans to invade Cuba. Kennedy found himself forced to allow the invasion to go forward because he feared that if he stopped it the news of the decision would leak and portray him as weak and indecisive.<sup>568</sup> With substantial US support, the Cuban exiles invaded their former home with the intention of overthrowing the new government. They landed at the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) but were quickly defeated by forces loyal to Castro.

The invasion had an important effect on Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who had a strong sentimental attachment to Castro and the Cuban Revolution. He began to look for a way to protect Cuba from US aggression and eventually proposed the emplacement of Soviet nuclear weapons there. Nuclear weapons in Cuba offered a number of benefits besides ensuring the safety of the Cuban Revolution, including distracting the West from Berlin, countering US missiles in Turkey, preventing another US invasion, and achieving success in a bold foreign policy move to counter growing domestic unrest in the Soviet Union.<sup>569</sup> On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1962, he sent an emissary to Cuban with his proposal.<sup>570</sup> Castro quickly accepted and shortly thereafter, nuclear infrastructure was sent to Cuba.

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<sup>568</sup> Don Munton, David A. Welch, The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Concise History (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2007), 18.

<sup>569</sup> Munton and Welch, 21-23.

<sup>570</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

One month later, in July, 1962, the US Central Intelligence Agency detected an increased level of Soviet activity in Cuba and warned Kennedy.<sup>571</sup> Shortly thereafter, US spy planes confirmed that construction had begun on ballistic nuclear missile bases in Cuba. This discovery sent Kennedy and a small group of officials searching for an appropriate response. They decided on a full military blockade of Cuba.

Throughout their deliberations on how to handle the emerging threat in Cuba, the US government did not, at any time, inform the Canadian government about the growing nuclear threat that the island represented. It was not until mere hours before he publicly addressed the US public that Kennedy sent an emissary to Diefenbaker to inform him of US plans. Subsequently a request came from Washington that Canadian forces in NORAD be placed on a heightened state of alert. The expectation was that the Canadian government would comply at once, but Diefenbaker refused to do so. Two days went by while Cabinet engaged in a very divisive deliberation over what position the Canadian government should take.

Diefenbaker's delay raised two important questions: was it justified? and why the delay in the first place? For Diefenbaker's detractors, the answers were easy. The delay constituted in effect a refusal to support one's ally, which could not be justified at a time of nuclear confrontation on any grounds. Why the delay? It was the regrettable and unacceptable result of Diefenbaker's anti-Americanism and his indecisiveness.<sup>572</sup>

Neither accusation is accurate. The claim that Diefenbaker was indecisive does not stand up to scrutiny. Regardless of whether or not his actions were justified, they were clearly decisive. He decided that it would be unwise to rush into offering support to

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<sup>571</sup> Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 797.

<sup>572</sup> See, for example, Glazov, 153.



the US.<sup>573</sup> There was not, at any time, any wavering on this position.<sup>574</sup> The charge that Diefenbaker's decision was the product of his anti-Americanism is not supported by the historical record, as will be shown below. There appears to have been no single factor that moved Diefenbaker to take the position that he did, but rather a variety of influences that determined his approach and actions.

One of these influences was Diefenbaker's perception of the origins of the crisis. With his abiding interest in international affairs, Diefenbaker watched as the tensions between Cuba and the US slowly became part of the escalating Cold War conflict. He laid a substantial portion of the blame for this turn of events at the feet of the Kennedy Administration. He believed that the roots of the Cuban Missile Crisis were to be found in the Bay of Pigs invasion. He had viewed this earlier adventure as risky and it led him to question the judgment of Kennedy and his advisors.<sup>575</sup> These people had been all too willing to take risks but obviously had not thought through the potential consequences of their plans. It was this combination of risk-taking and lack of foresight that Diefenbaker feared would lead the world to nuclear war. The Bay of Pigs invasion also told Diefenbaker that he had been correct to maintain Canada's trading relationship with Cuba. Castro, he believed, was not going anywhere and US actions against the Cuban government continued to produce unfortunate outcomes — notably pushing Cuba into the arms of the Soviet Bloc, and then turning Castro into a hero for standing up to the US.

Diefenbaker believed that the US defeat at the Bay of Pigs also hurt US pride and public standing. He worried that the event had sent Kennedy and other government

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<sup>573</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967*, 86.

<sup>574</sup> See Peter T. Haydon, *The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: Canadian Involvement Reconsidered* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of International Studies, 1993), 201.

<sup>575</sup> Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* (Toronto: Macfarlane, Walter and Ross, 1995), 119.

officials looking for a confrontation to regain both.<sup>576</sup> The sting of the failure had been that much more painful for the US coming as it did mere days after the Soviet Union had successfully put the first man, Yuri Gagarin, in space. It appeared that the Soviet Union had gained the upper hand in space at the same time as a small island had repulsed US efforts to interfere in its internal politics.

When US government officials learned of the emplacement of nuclear weapons in Cuba, Diefenbaker believed, they had decided that the only response was to confront Khrushchev. Diefenbaker was very doubtful about the wisdom of this strategy. He had told Kennedy in a previous conversation: “I do not think the USSR will go to war over Cuba.”<sup>577</sup> In his memoirs, he would maintain that the approach taken by Khrushchev was to create a “moderate and reasonable image.”<sup>578</sup> It was US leaders, still smarting from the Bay of Pigs invasion, that had brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

Diefenbaker’s hesitation in agreeing to a move Canada to a heightened alert status was clearly prompted by his desire to avoid encouraging the Kennedy leadership in its confrontation with the Soviet Union. He believed that the correct action for Canada was to calm a situation that was being aggravated by US actions. For Diefenbaker, it was US insecurities that were driving the confrontation, not Soviet ambitions.

From his perspective, the confrontation could and should have been dealt with by negotiations. He had initially hoped that the UN could play a role in resolving the conflict and proposed that it be dealt with by an international inspection team.<sup>579</sup> He was

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<sup>576</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Vol. 2, The Years of Achievement, 1956 to 1962* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, 1976), 174.

<sup>577</sup> John G. Diefenbaker, *One Canada: Vol. 3, The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada, 1977), 85.

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>579</sup> Denis Smith, *Rogue Tory: The Life and Legend of John G. Diefenbaker* (Toronto: MacFarlane, Walter and Ross, 1995), 457.

emphatic that the Canadian government must not “do or say anything that could add to the seriousness of the Crisis.”<sup>580</sup> Since it was the US government which had aggravated the situation, it made no sense for Canada to come to its support. His hope was to defuse the crisis. Thus, he delayed agreeing to a heightened alert. Only when it became obvious that the crisis had moved beyond the UN, and that the Soviet Union was not going to back down did he decide that Canada should stand with the US in the crisis. At this point he came to believe that there was a genuine threat to the security of Canada and its people.

Diefenbaker’s experience dealing with Kennedy told him that the root of the confrontation over Cuba lay with the US. Much has been written on the strains of the Diefenbaker-Kennedy relationship caused by their incompatible personalities.<sup>581</sup> This certainly played a role in the crisis, as the two leaders undeniably had a loathing for each other.<sup>582</sup> A deeper source of the tension between them, however, was political, rather than personal. It had to do with their respective perceptions of the relationship that existed between the two countries. A comment by Diefenbaker near the end of the first meeting in Washington between the two leaders provides clarity on his view of the relationship: “We must”, he said, “live together in friendship and cooperation. Neither of us can survive without the other.”<sup>583</sup> In short, Diefenbaker believed that Canada and the United States were independent partners who needed each other. The problem with

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<sup>580</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967*, 86.

<sup>581</sup> See Knowlton Nash’s *Fear and Loathing Across the Undefended Border*; Peter C. Newman’s *Renegade in Power*.

<sup>582</sup> Smith, 388.

<sup>583</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, Visit of Canadian Prime Minister Diefenbaker, Washington, February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963 Vol. XIII* (Washington, Department of State, 1994), 1145.

the Kennedy White House was that it did not view Canada as a partner, nor the US as a country needing Canada's support.<sup>584</sup>

Kennedy and Diefenbaker were basing their policy assumptions on very different conceptions of the Canada-US relationship. The reality was that Canada's position in the world had changed since the end of the Second World War, when its military and economic capabilities had been substantial compared to the devastated countries in Europe and Asia. By 1960, the recovery of these countries, particularly those in Europe, had greatly diminished Canada's influence in the world.<sup>585</sup> Diefenbaker understood this but he continued to view Canada as an integral part of the western alliance and an important defence partner of the US. The NORAD Agreement was a concrete expression of that partnership — with its requirement that there be advance consultation and agreement by the partners before any military action could be taken against a perceived threat. Kennedy, however, took a different view, considering Canada a less than equal partner, required to follow and support the US lead.

The success of the Canada-US relationship had always been based on good will. Where Eisenhower had viewed it as important to cultivate the Canadian Prime Minister through small gestures such as consultation and personal diplomacy, Kennedy saw little value in this. From the moment of his delay in responding to Diefenbaker's congratulatory message on his presidential victory, Kennedy acted in a manner that was hardly designed, or likely, to win over Diefenbaker. Indeed the record shows that

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<sup>584</sup> Ibid., 44-76.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid., 44.

Kennedy did not make strong efforts to win anyone over to his foreign policy positions.<sup>586</sup>

The deteriorating Diefenbaker-Kennedy relationship was hardly helped by the fact that by 1961 Diefenbaker was exhausted and fighting for his political life. The strains of governing, caused in part by his lack of trust and inability to delegate effectively, had begun to take their toll.<sup>587</sup> One of the results of this, as Basil Robinson reported, was a tendency to focus on trivialities.<sup>588</sup> Unfortunately, Kennedy soon gave Diefenbaker plenty of reasons to focus on the trivial — for example, when he mispronounced Diefenbaker's name in February of 1961, calling him his old friend, Prime Minister "Diefenbawker."<sup>589</sup>

The turning point in Diefenbaker's judgment of Kennedy had been the Bay of Pigs. For Diefenbaker, this misadventure revealed a couple of things about Kennedy. First, it reinforced his initial observation that the President was brash and willing to take foolish risks. Second, it demonstrated that Kennedy was not bothered by "the growing authority and capacity of the CIA. On the contrary, he seemed quite proud of it."<sup>590</sup> Diefenbaker was led to wonder about the quality of security intelligence that the President was getting. By the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Diefenbaker had grave reservations about Kennedy's reliability and that of his policy advisers.

At an April 1961 meeting between Kennedy and Diefenbaker, at which they discussed the Bay of Pigs, Diefenbaker was assured by the President that he would be

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<sup>586</sup> Kevin J. Gloin, "Canada-US Relations in the Diefenbaker Era: Another Look" in The Diefenbaker Legacy: Canadian Politics, Law and Society Since 1957 edited by Donald C. Story and R. Bruce Shepard (Regina: Canadian Great Plains Research Center, 1988), 11.

<sup>587</sup> Robinson, 168.

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>589</sup> Smith, 380.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

consulted before the US took any further steps to intervene militarily in Cuba.<sup>591</sup> Perhaps Kennedy forgot his promise while he considered ordering a military blockade of Cuba. It is quite certain that Diefenbaker did not forget,<sup>592</sup> providing a further reason why he was so angry at not being consulted over the new Cuban crisis.

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1962, Kennedy sent the former US Ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant, as a special emissary to see Diefenbaker and inform him that Soviet missiles were being installed in Cuba and that he planned to announce a military blockade of the island until they were removed.<sup>593</sup> US leaders indicated shortly after this that they wanted Canada to raise the alert level for its NORAD forces. Their expectation was that the Canadian government would. Diefenbaker refused.

His refusal has often been explained by his anti-Americanism.<sup>594</sup> It would be more accurate to argue that it was a distrust of Kennedy that drove his actions. In his memoirs, he would say that he believed Kennedy “was perfectly capable of taking the world to the brink of thermal-nuclear destruction to prove himself a man for our times, a courageous champion of Western democracy.”<sup>595</sup> To Diefenbaker, it was not fear of the US that drove Canada’s approach during the Cuban Missile Crisis; it was fear of Kennedy.

While it is arguable that Diefenbaker was too sensitive to personal slights and let his feelings about Kennedy get in the way of the possibility of an effective response to a

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<sup>591</sup> Memorandum of Conversation between President Kennedy and Prime Minister Diefenbaker – Cuba and Latin America, Ottawa, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1961. Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963 Vol. XIII, 1153.

<sup>592</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada. Memoirs of the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker: The Years of Achievement, 1957 to 1962, 171.

<sup>593</sup> Letter from John F. Kennedy to John G. Diefenbaker, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1962. DCC, Series XII Personal and Confidential, Vol. 88, File # 204 United States-Kennedy, 061414-5.

<sup>594</sup> Peter C. Newman, Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), 336-40.

<sup>595</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967, 80.

serious international crisis, Kennedy must shoulder at least some of the blame for the stand-off between the Canadian and US governments. What Kennedy was seeking in fact was political support. But his judgment was poor if he was assuming that he could get such support from a man with whom he had never bothered to develop a positive relationship.

Yet Diefenbaker's approach to the crisis was determined ultimately not by personalities but rather by considerations relating to Canada's national interests. The priorities that drove Diefenbaker were the same ones that underlay his more general position on Canada-Latin America relations—the desire to achieve greater autonomy for Canada in foreign affairs, and the expansion of Canadian influence in the Latin American region.

Nor was Diefenbaker's approach to this crisis that much different from the approach that had been taken by previous Liberal governments, which favoured having international conflicts referred to, and if possible settled by, multilateral organizations. Diefenbaker's attempt to have the crisis dealt with by the UN was very much in keeping with the Canadian tradition of middle power internationalism,<sup>596</sup> as was his effort to lower the temperature of the international system caused by the escalating conflict by the US and the Soviets over Cuba. In the event, the US was not prepared under any circumstances to allow the UN to deal with the crisis and expressed considerable displeasure with the Canadian idea of a UN inspection team.

The same disrespect that was shown by Kennedy for Diefenbaker was also demonstrated by the messenger who was sent to brief Ottawa on the crisis, former US Ambassador to Canada, Livingston Merchant. In a conversation with Basil Robinson a

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<sup>596</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967, 88.

few months after the crisis, Merchant made clear his own views regarding the necessity of consultation with America's NORAD partner. In response to Robinson's comments that he felt sorry for Diefenbaker because of the position in which he had been placed by the lack of consultation, Merchant replied,

I personally didn't feel a tenth as sorry for the PM as I had for Harold Macmillan who had comparably short advance notice. I didn't think Canada had earned, by its actions and by certain non-actions, the right to extreme intimacy of relations which had existed in years past.<sup>597</sup>

The problem with Merchant's viewpoint is that Canada did not have to earn the right to consultation; NORAD required it.

Merchant's successor as Ambassador to Canada, William Butterworth, did little to renew the cordial relations between Canada and the US that had existed before Kennedy's election. He reported after his first meeting with Diefenbaker that he thought perhaps the Prime Minister had palsy or Parkinson's disease.<sup>598</sup> Diefenbaker's concern that the United States did not accord proper respect to its northern neighbor and defence partner was borne out by the statements of both Merchant and Butterworth.

In addition to Diefenbaker's perception of the origins of the crisis and his relationship with Kennedy, he was also influenced by his personal assessment of the threat posed by the Soviet Union. The placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba was not seen as a Cuban action but rather a Soviet one and he therefore placed it in the context of the Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and the US. Furthermore, he believed that "Khrushchev had been caught fishing in American waters" but that he had "no interest in a major confrontation with the United States except where the vital

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<sup>597</sup> Memorandum from Livingston T. Merchant to Secretary of State Rusk and Under Secretary of State (Ball). Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963 Vol. XIII, 1190.

<sup>598</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in Canada to the Department of State, December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1962. Foreign Relations of the United States 1961-1963 Vol. XIII, 1192.



security interests of the USSR are at stake.”<sup>599</sup> In the end, Diefenbaker assessed the Soviet threat in the context of Canada’s national interest which led him to state in his memoirs, “Certainly we wanted the Soviet missiles removed from Cuba: but not if there was an alternative, at the price of global destruction.”<sup>600</sup>

Diefenbaker’s assessment of the Cuban Missile Crisis was that it was not really a military confrontation but rather a dangerous international situation made worse by the actions of a US President who was determined to confront the communist enemy militarily. Diefenbaker determined that Kennedy’s concern, from the beginning, was to appear strong to Khrushchev and the Soviet Union. He had decided that once Soviet nuclear weapons were present in the western hemisphere it would be impossible to dislodge them. Diefenbaker by contrast believed that removing the missiles was possible through negotiation.<sup>601</sup>

Once it became apparent that the crisis could not be settled by negotiations and that a nuclear confrontation was inevitable, Diefenbaker took the position that the time had come to prepare Canada for an attack by those who posed a direct threat to Canada’s territory and the lives of its citizens. Rising in the House of Commons, he stated:

I think Canadians are in general agreement that these offensive weapons, located so contiguously to our continent are a direct and immediate menace to Canada. Furthermore they are a serious menace to the deterrent strength of the whole western alliance on which our security is founded.<sup>602</sup>

Canadian forces would be placed on high alert.

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<sup>599</sup> Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967, 82.

<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>601</sup> For Kennedy’s view see Schlesinger, 803 for Diefenbaker’s see Diefenbaker, One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967, 86.

<sup>602</sup> House of Commons Debates, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1962, 911.

It is of interest that Diefenbaker's initial perceptions of the crisis and the key players in it proved to be correct. Khrushchev was more cautious than Kennedy and he did eventually back down.<sup>603</sup> Kennedy was brash and willing to escalate the situation in order to get the missiles removed from Cuba. The matter of the accuracy of Diefenbaker's instincts has often been lost in the everlasting debate concerning what actions Diefenbaker should have taken. The fact is that the US had a far greater nuclear capacity than the Soviet Union in 1962 and this likely meant that the latter would not start a nuclear confrontation.<sup>604</sup> Diefenbaker sensed that it was Kennedy who was the more dangerous of the two leaders and who was more liable to cause a confrontation.

This was not only Diefenbaker's assumption but that of most of NATO's leaders at the time. Both Harold Macmillan and Charles de Gaulle had serious concerns about Kennedy's actions and refused to mobilize their forces because they believed it would be viewed as a provocation.<sup>605</sup> And it was not just the French and English who were concerned. Macmillan noted in his diary, "the Germans were very frightened though pretending to want firmness, the Italians windy; the Scandinavians rather sour."<sup>606</sup>

Diefenbaker's views on the dangers of US escalation and the threat of the Soviet Union were echoed by Macmillan during a telephone conversation between the two. He recommended a cautious approach to Diefenbaker and told him that Britain would not be placing its forces on alert.<sup>607</sup> De Gaulle shared Diefenbaker's concerns over escalation, and he shared Diefenbaker's anger at "being informed but not consulted."<sup>608</sup> In short,

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<sup>603</sup> Diefenbaker, *One Canada: The Tumultuous Years, 1962 to 1967*, 82.

<sup>604</sup> Haydon, 194.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>606</sup> Alistair Horne, *Harold Macmillan: Volume 2, 1957-1986* (London: MacMillan London, 1989), 380.

<sup>607</sup> Jocelyn Maynard Ghent, "Canada, the United States and the Cuban Missile Crisis" *Pacific Historical Review*, 48, no. 2, (1979): 174.

<sup>608</sup> Gloin, 11.

Kennedy's actions during the crisis did not meet with the approval of the majority of the western allies.

Besides the external pressures, Diefenbaker's decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis were also influenced by domestic considerations, particularly divisions within his Cabinet, and an engaged public. About half the Cabinet was not sure what Canada should do. The other half was split into two groups. The first group, which included Alvin Hamilton, J. Waldo Monteith, Richard Bell, Howard Green and Diefenbaker, believed that Canada needed to demonstrate restraint.<sup>609</sup> The second group was composed of those who supported the assertion of Douglas Harkness, the Minister of National Defense, that Canada needed to offer complete, immediate and full military support to the US.<sup>610</sup>

The crisis put Canadian military officials in a difficult situation. Although the Canadian and US Air Forces were integrated, the authority to place the Canadian forces on heightened alert rested with the Prime Minister and Cabinet, not with the military.<sup>611</sup> Harkness, however, firmly believed that the NORAD agreement meant that Canada had to follow the US lead immediately. Harkness and his allies in cabinet argued strongly for this, and were no more prepared to change their minds than those like Green who were opposed.<sup>612</sup>

The influence that Diefenbaker had on his Cabinet, and that the Cabinet had on Diefenbaker, remains a contentious issue. Peyton Lyon has argued that had Diefenbaker strongly favoured going on heightened alert then the rest of the Cabinet would have fallen

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<sup>609</sup> Howard Green, interviewed by Jack Granatstein, 1969. York University Institute for Behavioral Research. City of Vancouver Archives, Series MSS 903, Vol. 605, File D-1,2.

<sup>610</sup> Haydon, 192.

<sup>611</sup> Ghent, 170.

<sup>612</sup> Ibid., 172.

in line, and the division in Cabinet would have been averted.<sup>613</sup> Yet Jocelyn Maynard Ghent maintains that the problem was caused by the divisions in the Cabinet: had the entire Cabinet been unified in supporting a heightened alert then Diefenbaker would likely have accepted that and given Canada's support.<sup>614</sup>

The point is that the Cabinet divisions were deep and reflected differences in the personal views of Ministers about what was the appropriate action for Canada to take in relation to the crisis.<sup>615</sup> So strongly convinced was the Minister of National Defence that Canada should be supporting the US that, after a frustrating discussion in Cabinet in which no decision was taken about the heightened alert, he went ahead and authorized the alert on his own, without Diefenbaker's knowledge.<sup>616</sup> This was a serious matter, even though technically Harkness did not actually violate the rules governing the authorization of the alert, and would lead to the alienation of Harkness from Diefenbaker and ultimately his resignation from the Cabinet over the nuclear issue the following year. As for Green, he was also impassioned but more influential than Harkness, believing that the US, by its actions, was leading the world toward a nuclear war.<sup>617</sup> He summarized his own viewpoint a decade later in an interview when he was asked about the Cuban Missile Crisis. "My God" he replied, "it would have been utter folly to rush in and try to urge the Americans on. Kennedy himself was having his troubles holding his own people back without being pushed by others."<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>613</sup> Peyton Lyon,, *Canada in World Affairs 1961-63* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), 37.

<sup>614</sup> Ghent, 177.

<sup>615</sup> Sean Craig McLuckie, "Diefenbaker, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Impact of Society on Foreign Policy." Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1998.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>617</sup> Green, Interview by Jack Granatstein, 9, 34.

<sup>618</sup> Green, Interview by Jack Granatstein, 37.

It is important not to overstate Green's influence during the crisis. Newman has argued that it was an impassioned plea from Green during a Cabinet debate that changed most of the Cabinet Ministers' minds, including Diefenbaker, from supporting the US position to opposing it. Green stated that, "if we go along with the Americans then we'll be their vassals forever."<sup>619</sup> In fact Green was only stating what Diefenbaker and a large percentage of cabinet already believed.<sup>620</sup> He served to reinforce, not change, the prevailing attitudes.

But as much as Green, Harkness and Diefenbaker figured prominently in Canada's reaction to the crisis, they were expressing at the highest official level deep differences among Canadians over a variety of matters including the emplacement of nuclear weapons on Canadian soil, the desirability of following or opposing US foreign policy, the merits of disarmament and arms control, and the best way to conduct the Cold War. It was genuine and profound differences over these issues, and not simply the personal views of Cabinet Ministers that caused the Cabinet difficulty in dealing with the crisis.

Diefenbaker was faced with a sharply divided Canadian public. Many Canadians felt that their government should offer its full support to the US in the fight against the communists. Others were worried about the possibility of nuclear war, while others, because of a strong sense of Canadian nationalism, believed strongly that Canada should decide its own position instead of blindly following the US..<sup>621</sup> As with the divisions in his Cabinet, the divisions in public opinion had the practical effect of creating genuine

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<sup>619</sup> Peter C. Newman, Renegade in Power: The Diefenbaker Years (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), 337.

<sup>620</sup> Ghent, 176.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-66.

uncertainty in Diefenbaker's mind and an unwillingness to make a decision until it was clearer what Canadians wanted the government to do. Had the public been unified or its preferences clearer, it is likely that this would have an important effect on Diefenbaker's handling of the crisis.

What is clear is that Diefenbaker's decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis reflected his personal conviction that Canada's foreign policy should serve the country's national interests.. His refusal to offer immediate and unconditional support for the Kennedy Administration in confronting Khrushchev was a product of his belief that such action would make the crisis worse, heightening instability in a way that could only threaten trade and other interests of Canada in and beyond the region. Canadians simply saw Cuba through a different lens than the Americans. For Canada, Cuba represented trade and new opportunities to build commercial and other ties. For the US, it represented a potential security threat off the coast of the state of Florida. It became a security issue for Canada only when the Kennedy Administration made it one. In the event, Canada went further than any other allied country in its support for the US, but this was insufficient for the Kennedy Administration which thought that verbal and political support should have been forthcoming from Ottawa at once,

## CONCLUSION

John Diefenbaker's Latin American policy was based on his vision of Canada's national interest, which for him, along with security, economic prosperity, domestic unity, meant a strong emphasis on the achievement of greater autonomy in foreign policy for Canada vis-à-vis the US and the expansion of Canadian exports to the region. For Diefenbaker, an enhanced relationship with Latin America had the potential to lessen Canada's dependency on the US, while giving Latin American countries an outlet for their trade, commercial and financial relations other than the US. This new approach implied that Canada would formulate and implement policy that focused more on Canadian political interests and goals. It was not a matter of charting a totally independent policy for Canada in Latin America — true policy independence was impossible to achieve. Nor was it the case that Canada would necessarily set itself in opposition to the US when it disagreed with its policies. For Diefenbaker the goal was to pursue a foreign policy that was aligned with, but not subservient to, the US.

The policy, in its broad essentials, would not be that different from that pursued by previous Liberal governments under King and St. Laurent. Canadian governments, whether Conservative or Liberal, believed in the promotion of Canadian trade, commercial and financial interests in Latin America, and their foreign policies were similarly shaped by the context of the post-war world, and in particular the Cold War. The key difference with the Diefenbaker government lay in Diefenbaker's focus on the political aspects of the Canada-US-Latin America relationship. In addition to building economic, financial and commercial ties with the Latin America region, Diefenbaker

sought to increase the presence of Canada there to diversify its relations away from the US.

But it was not only the policy goals that distinguished Diefenbaker's approach to Latin America – it was the manner in which he formulated and implemented foreign policy. Throughout his six years as Prime Minister he took a personal interest in foreign policy issues, and frequently intervened in the processes of policy development and policy implementation.

At times these personal interventions were effective, for example in cases where he took the initiative to meet and forge personal connections with leaders in Latin America. He also used the opportunities presented by visits to Canada by these leaders to further these connections – for the larger purpose of promoting Canadian interests. But this approach had drawbacks – for example, in the cases of Argentina and Brazil when the presidents with whom Diefenbaker had been cultivating a close relationship, Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira and Dr. Arturo Frondizi, were replaced; much of the basis for the improving relationship with Brazil and Argentina was then lost. The way to build a lasting and effective relationship with the countries of Latin America — through the negotiation of formal treaties or trade agreements — was not pursued.

This was a major flaw in how Diefenbaker pursued his policy priorities. He lacked the patience for lengthy negotiations and often had little time for government officials. It was, of course, these officials who, by virtue of their expertise, knowledge and contacts, could have laid the foundations for long term trade and commercial agreements with Latin America. Despite the increase in trade and commerce between



Canada and the region during the Diefenbaker years, no new agreements were signed with any Latin American country.

Rather than promoting and expediting trade agreements, Diefenbaker intervened in Cabinet discussions to support discrete commercial, financial and other initiatives that furthered the development of ties between Canada and Latin America. His government provided credit insurance for private business deals or sought to expedite initiatives in politically sensitive areas, such as the sale of ships to the pre-revolutionary Cuban government. He championed the sale of numerous Canadian goods, such as tractors, locomotives and ships, to Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, the West Indies and Cuba. In the meantime, in travelling to Canada leaders from various Latin American countries attempted to convince Diefenbaker and his Cabinet colleagues that there was room for Canada to play a more active role in pan-American affairs. They hoped that Canada could be an important trade partner, while acting as a moderating influence on the US.

Diefenbaker was influenced undoubtedly by the interest taken by these Latin American leaders in Canada. But there were other influences guiding his approach to the region. His respect for Cabinet opinion has been well documented: he always listened closely to his Cabinet, to the point where even his strongest supporters were worried that he was too concerned about its opinion.<sup>622</sup> The backing of Cabinet ministers such as Gordon Churchill, George Hees, Sidney Smith, Pierre Sevigny and Howard Green reinforced many of his thoughts concerning the opportunities that existed in Latin America, including those posed by a Canadian membership in the OAS. However, there

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<sup>622</sup> This was a comment that Howard Green would make a decade later in an interview with Jack Granatstein. See Howard Green, interviewed by Jack Granatstein, 1969. York University Institute for Behavioral Research. City of Vancouver Archives., Series MSS 903, Vol. 605, File D-1,2.

were moments, such as during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the Cabinet was deeply divided and created problems for him.

Diefenbaker's Latin American policy was also influenced by the position that was taken by the major countries of Latin America toward Canada, including Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, the Federation of the West Indies, and Cuba. They all actively sought to bring Canada deeper into the pan-American system because they saw in Canada a potential to moderate US influence in the region. When Diefenbaker or representatives of his government visited Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, they were met with a warm welcome by the host country that left a positive impression on them. Diefenbaker's Mexico trip, in particular, convinced him that Canada was missing an opportunity to expand its trade and influence in Latin America, and it was at this point that he contemplated reversing his position on membership in the OAS.

Both larger and smaller Latin American nations, from Brazil to Venezuela, favoured Canadian membership in the OAS, as did the Eisenhower Administration. But the change in US leadership from Eisenhower to Kennedy led Diefenbaker to change his mind on the question. He came to believe, as Canadian leaders had before him, that membership in the organization would place Canada in an uncomfortable and difficult position between the US and the Latin American countries.

Obviously, a major influence on Diefenbaker's Latin American policies was his relationships with the two US presidents during his period in office. The impact of those relationships was felt particularly in relation to questions surrounding Cuba. That Diefenbaker was centrally involved in discussions relating to Cuba was understandable, given that, for Canada this was a matter of high policy that involved the Prime Minister.

What is striking is that it was Diefenbaker's personal reaction to the policy positions of the two US presidents that influenced Canadian policy. He responded at a personal level to Eisenhower's invitation to speak his mind on Cuba, evidently viewing it as an expression of confidence by Eisenhower in his judgment, and respect for Canada. His response to Kennedy's public suggestion that Canada join the OAS was anything but positive; viewing it as discourteous and perhaps even contemptuous to him and his government. He reacted in the same way to Kennedy's failure to consult him before confronting the Soviet Union over Cuba.

In conclusion, Diefenbaker's policies towards countries such as Cuba, Mexico, the Federation of the West Indies, Argentina and Brazil were somewhat successful in expanding Canadian trade and commercial activity beyond the United States, and in establishing a stronger political relationship between Canada and the Latin American region. The policies were remarkably consistent, reflecting Diefenbaker's desire to increase Canada's autonomy vis-a-vis the US, and differentiated by his personal involvement in initiating policy at the Cabinet level and in building and cultivating relationships with Latin American leaders; the goal was to further Canadian economic and political interests in the region. Though there were possibilities for greater expansion and connections with Latin America that were missed, Diefenbaker's Latin American policy would be built upon and continued by successive Liberal and Conservative governments once he left office.

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