

Canadian Ties to U.S. Empire: Lester Pearson and the Myth of Canada as Peaceable Kingdom

Part II

By [Richard Sanders](#)

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[Canada Ties to the U.S. Empire: Lester Pearson and the Myth of Canada as “Peaceable Kingdom”](#)

By [Richard Sanders](#), March 31, 2021

Pearson was central to the constitutional coup that propelled him into power by orchestrating the toppling of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker (1957-1963).

John F. Kennedy had no love for Canada’s Progressive Conservative leader. “My brother really hated only two men in all his presidency,” said Robert Kennedy. “One was Sukarno [Indonesia’s left-wing president] and the other was Diefenbaker.” The central focus of JFK’s hatred for Diefenbaker was his defiant refusal to allow the U.S. to arm Canadian missiles with American nuclear warheads.^[1]

Diefenbaker’s demise was orchestrated by a bevy of highly skilled experts in covert action from the CIA, State Department, White House and Pentagon, plus two successive U.S. ambassadors to Canada, America’s leading pollster (aided by the world’s best computer technology), and the U.S. Air Force general who then led NATO.

McGeorge Bundy, then Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, even bragged that acting U.S. Secretary of State “George Ball and I knocked over the Diefenbaker

government....”^[2]

As usual, these American coup artists relied on local compradors to aid their efforts in replacing an uncooperative ally.

Diefenbaker had to go and who could be better than Pearson to replace him? For decades, Pearson had proven himself as a stalwart supporter of U.S. imperial interests. Canadian co-conspirators included an RCAF commander, the air marshal who chaired Canada’s military chiefs of staff, Liberal power brokers and top newsprint journalists.

Although Pearson was America’s man in Ottawa, U.S. power brokers knew that he sometimes had to pander to a large swath of the Canadian electorate which had anti-American feelings.

To retain support from these voters, Pearson had to appear to be more critical of the U.S. than he really was. This was revealed by Walton Butterworth, the JFK-appointed U.S. Ambassador to Canada (1962-1968), in a secret telegram at the climax of the U.S. coup in early February 1963.

His once-secret message, recalling that “Diefenbaker first came to power on wave of anti-U.S. jingoism,” scorned him as an “undependable, unscrupulous political animal” who U.S. authorities had just “boxed ... in.”

Butterworth noted that when Diefenbaker cried foul regarding the U.S. forceful intrusion into Canadian politics which soon resulted in Dief’s demise, “Pearson and other party leaders could not permit him [to] pose as [the] sole spokesman for Canadian nationalism; hence they had to protect their flanks and join chorus of protest at our ‘intrusion.’”^[3] Butterworth continued with the following assessment of the quickly unfolding situation and what lay ahead with Pearson’s anticipated ascension to power:

“[W]e are forcing Pearson to go faster and further than he desires in the direction we favor. ... [W]e are entering new phase in U.S.-Canadian relations. ... We look forward to ... greater Canadian realization of their need to cultivate good relations with us.... [W]e think we will wish [to] take more coolly appraising look at concessions we offer in return for their readiness to accommodate themselves to us.... [W]e do not want to buy same asset time and again as is now the case. We have reached point where our relations must be based on something more solid than accommodation to neurotic Canadian view of us and world. We should be less the accoucheur [midwife] of Canada’s illusions.”^[4]



U.S. ambassador to Canada Walton Butterworth with JFK in the White House. [Source: jfklibrary.org]

Within a few months after assuming power, Pearson's government not only allowed the U.S. to arm Canada's ground-launched Bomarc missiles, it announced Canada's acquisition of "nuclear weapons for the Honest John missiles and CF-104 fighter aircraft in Europe and ... the CF-101 (Voodoo) fighter aircraft in Canada."^[5]



So blatant was Pearson's duplicity, that future prime minister Pierre Trudeau denounced him in 1963 as "a defrocked priest of peace." Trudeau revealed that Pearson reversed Liberal Party policy on nuclear weapons without consulting the national council,... its executive committee, ... the parliamentary caucus or even with his principal advisors. The 'Pope' had spoken. It was up to the faithful to believe ... [T]he Pentagon ... obliged Mr. Pearson to betray his party's platform ... Power presented itself to Mr. Pearson; he had nothing to lose except honour. He lost it. And his whole party lost it with him.^[6]

Coup in Brazil, 1964

When Brazil elected a left-wing party by a huge margin in 1960, the U.S. began coordinating a coup that ushered in years of military dictatorship.

The coup was justified by wild claims that Brazil's elected officials might turn into communists. It was supported by Brazilian Admiral Carlos P. Botto who, having backed fascism during WWII, went on to work closely with the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN), and its leader Yaroslav Stetsko,^[7] in creating the pro-fascist World Anti-Communist League.

Canadian officials, both Liberal and Tory, shared their rabid phobia about the rising popularity of communism in Latin America. After a 1961 government mission to South America, Progressive Conservative MP Pierre Seigny told parliament that in Brazil, Canada had allies who want to cooperate with us and to prevent ... the birth of subversive movements in that country where huge illiterate populations are living, which, if they were to be subjected to communist influence, could easily cause a social and economic revolution.^[8]

The Liberals shared this right-wing mindset. "Canadian reaction to the military coup," said historian Rosana Barbosa, "was careful, polite and allied with American rhetoric."

Barbosa, a Brazilian-Canadian, says Pearson, who became prime minister the year before the coup, "did not publicly criticize the new regime. Pearson's foreign policy ... was supportive of the United States."^[9]

Pearson's pro-coup stance was good for business, especially the Brazilian Power and Light Co. (Brascan), one of Canada's biggest profiteers in Latin America. As revealed in *Let Us Prey* (1974), there was a revolving door between Brascan and the Liberal cabinets of St. Laurent, Pearson and Trudeau.

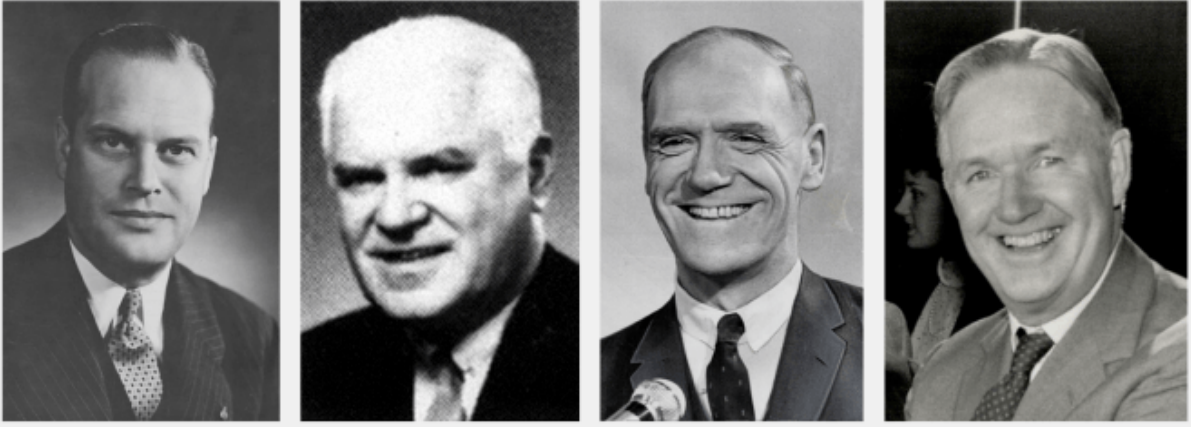
For example, Robert Winters, who held two cabinet posts under St. Laurent and was Pearson's trade minister, became Brascan's president. Winters praised Brazil's coup regime, saying it "was dedicated to the principles of private enterprise" and "create[d] a climate friendly to foreign capital."

Jack Nicholson, Brascan's CEO in Brazil in the 1950s, held three cabinet posts under Pearson. Mitchell Sharp, whose career began under St. Laurent in 1947, held the trade and finance posts in Pearson's cabinet.

After a stint as Brascan's vice president, Sharp returned to politics and was appointed

Trudeau's foreign minister.^[10] Another Brascan executive in Trudeau's cabinet was Anthony Abbott,^[11] who held three finance-related posts in the late 1970s.

These cabinet ministers in the Liberal governments of St. Laurent, Pearson and Trudeau were all top executives of Brascan (Brazilian Power and Light Co.) which, being one of Canada's biggest corporations in Latin America, saw great profit in the Brazil's 1964 coup.



Robert Winters **Jack Nicholson** **Mitchell Sharp** **Anthony Abbott**

[Source: coat.ncf.ca]

Invasion in the Dominican Republic, 1965

In February 1963, the Dominican Republic elected a pro-Castro government led by Juan Bosch, which lasted only seven months.

When a military junta seized power in a coup that September, expelling the elected president, Bosch's supporters fought to regain control, and in April, led by Colonel Francisco Caamaño retook the National Palace. To prevent Caamaño's forces from restoring a revolutionary government, the U.S. invaded with 20,000 Marines.



Two weeks after the U.S. Marine invasion, Canadian government representatives were approached by Caamaño, who asked for recognition. Pearson declined.

New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Tommy Douglas, the father of Canada's free health-care system, asked Pearson what evidence he had from the U.S. "that the forces of Colonel Caamaño, which are seeking to re-establish the elected government ... are indeed communist controlled and communist dominated."

When Pearson replied that they "[c]ertainly ... have communists in their ... controlling group," Douglas asked again for proof and Pearson said he could not assess the degree of their communist "infiltration."^[12]

It did not seem to occur to either that the legitimacy of pro-Bosch forces was its overwhelming popular support and that, if people wanted a communist government, they should be allowed to have one.

Pearson revealed his total bias in support of the U.S. invasion by saying that the coup regime was a legitimate "government" that had to protect "law and order" by stopping an "insurrection" by dangerous pro-Bosch forces.

In 2000, Liberals institutionalized this Pearsonian tradition of justifying U.S. invasions with humanitarian-sounding narratives by helping to create a deceptive UN doctrine called the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P).

Chrétien's foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, rallied support from mainstream peace, human rights and development activists for NATO's illegal 1999 war against Yugoslavia.

In 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin, Jr.'s, Liberal government used R2P memes to disguise Canadian ground troops used in the U.S.-led invasion, regime change and occupation of Haiti (the Dominican Republic's neighbor), as if they were humanitarian "peacekeepers."^[13]

Supporting U.S. Nuclear War Policies

From the Cold War's earliest days, Pearson was a strong voice for the idea that the moral forces of the "democratic West" had to amass a vast arsenal of weapons for a possible world war against "the totalitarian East."

This, ironically, is why Pearson saw his key role in creating NATO as one of his most valuable gifts to global peace. From its inception in 1949, before the Soviets had tested a single atomic bomb, U.S. nuclear weapons have been a cornerstone of NATO's "defense" policies. From the Soviet perspective, having been under attack by Western forces obsessed with its containment and annihilation since 1917, it responded to NATO's creation by forming the Warsaw Pact in 1955.

By 1950, left-leaning peace groups around the world were busy supporting the Stockholm Peace Appeal. This petition campaign, promoted by the communist-led World Peace Congress, called for "the unconditional banning by all countries of the atomic weapon as an instrument of aggression and mass extermination of people."

The appeal also asked governments to declare that they would “regard as a war criminal that government which first uses the atomic weapon against any country.” By February 1950, this “petition for peace,” bearing the signatures of 500,000 Canadians, was presented to government officials in Ottawa.

In a letter to a Vancouver newspaper to correct “a false report by an Ottawa reporter,” Rev. James Endicott, chairman of the Canadian Peace Congress, said “We are proud that this petition, which originated in Canada, was circulated to all countries in the world, gaining the endors[ment] of 450 million men and women.”^[14]



Peace float built by Canadian Peace Congress in the 1950s. [Source: focusonsocialism.ca]

Not surprisingly, this successful campaign, which rallied widespread public opposition to NATO’s bellicose “first use,” nuclear-weapons policies, also enraged many Cold Warriors, including Lester Pearson.

In a March 1950 address to 500 civil servants about a week after Endicott’s letter was published, Pearson said Canada would “take every ... measure to find and root out treason and sedition in our midst.”^[15] (Sedition and treason carry penalties of 14 years and life imprisonment, respectively.)

Pearson’s speech, quoted in an Ottawa paper, singled out the Canadian Peace Congress for a moralizing rebuke:

“[B]e on guard against the more immediate menace of the individual who beneath the mask of loyal service to the country, or wearing the mantle of the Peace Congress has knowingly or unknowingly sold his soul to Moscow.”^[16]

In response, Peace Congress activist Edith Holtom wrote to the paper, saying:

“If enough Canadians, including civil servants, would protest against selling the soul of Canada to American militarism, there would be no need for Mr. Pearson to refer to peacemakers as a menace.... [H]ow dare Mr. Pearson call a person a menace who joins ... with thousands of others to warn our government of what might happen if changes are not made in policy-making?”^[17]

Later, in a 1951 speech to the well-heeled Sudbury Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Club, Pearson branded the Canadian Peace Congress an agent of “foreign aggressive imperialism.”^[18]

Besides the Liberals and Conservatives, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), forerunner of the NDP, also saw the Peace Congress as a menacing threat. The CCF executive forbade members from joining the Congress and threatened disciplinary action against CCFers who signed the Stockholm Appeal.^[19]

Pearson had such contempt for the Congress that when 50 engineering students made a coup-like effort to destroy its University of Toronto chapter, he said in their support:

“If more Canadians were to show something of this high-spirited crusading zeal, we would very soon hear very little of the Canadian Peace Congress and its works. We would simply take it over.”^[20]

Imperialist Pro-NATO Propaganda

Pearson was groomed for political power by another loyal Canadian servant of imperial interests—Mackenzie King, who had appointed him foreign minister in 1948.

King’s ascent to power had been aided by his work as “labor adviser” for billionaire John D. Rockefeller, Jr., America’s anti-union, robber baron who financed fascism and collaborated with the Nazis.^[21]

From his unelected cabinet post, Pearson was well-placed to guide his gullible boss. An example of Pearson’s early, pro-U.S. advice occurred in 1946, when King was considering whether to take Canada along a middle path between the hardened Cold War extremes of the U.S. and the USSR. To convince King that he should hitch Canada securely to America’s anti-Soviet wagon, Pearson wrote a memo telling him that without some fundamental change in the Soviet state system and in the policies and views of its leaders, the USSR is bound to come into open conflict with western democracy.^[22]

With this prediction, said historian Joe Levitt, “Pearson seemed to be asserting that a war with the Soviet Union was virtually inevitable.” Levitt noted that, “Pearson may have worded the memo ... to play on ... King’s fears of the Soviet Union” so that he would bow to U.S. demands for greater military access to Arctic regions claimed by Canada.^[23]

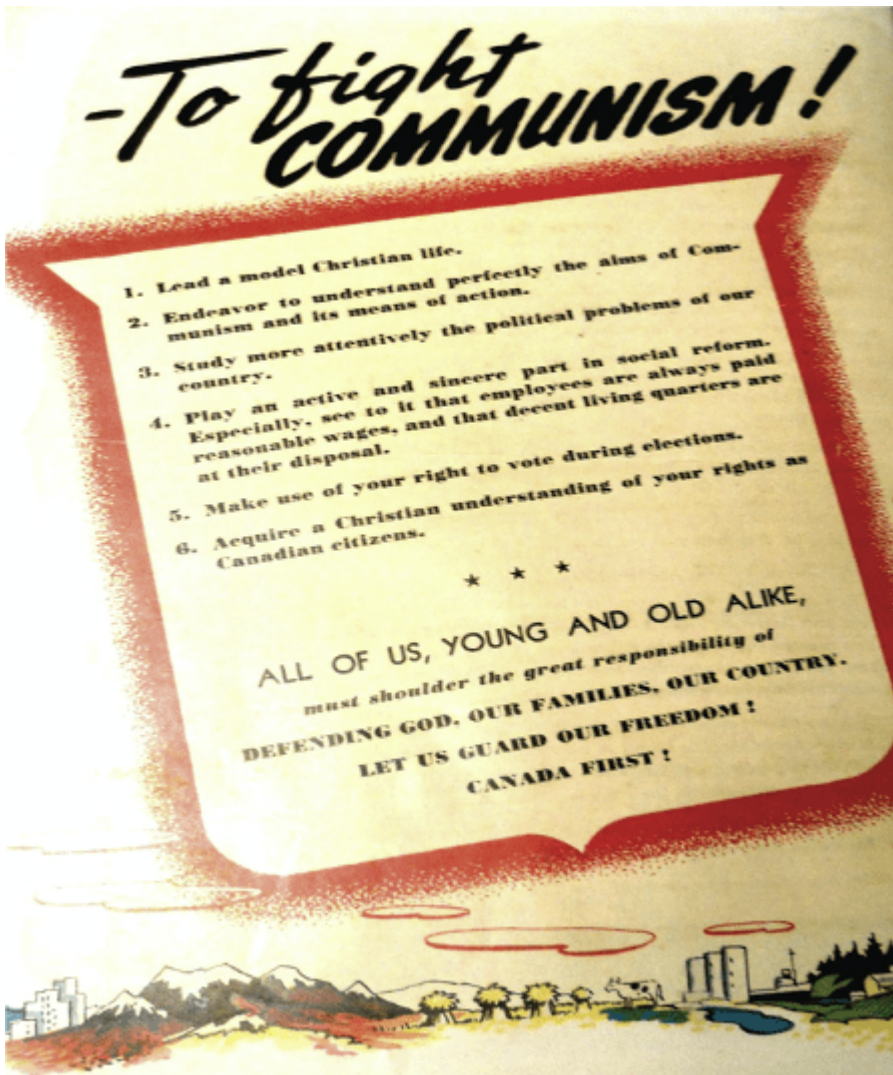


[Source: coldwarteamprojectfall2014]

Pearson's fear-mongering was clear from his very first speech to Parliament: "There is no doubt that fear has gripped the world again," he said, "fear arising primarily out of ... the brutal domination of revolutionary communism, based on the massive and expanding militarism of totalitarian Russia."^[24]

Pearson's anti-Red hyperbole knew few bounds and smacked of ethnic hatred: "[T]he crusading and subversive power of communism," he claimed, "has been harnessed by a cold-blooded, calculating, victoriously powerful Slav empire for its own political purposes."^[25] (Emphasis added.)

To Pearson and other Cold Warriors, the world was torn apart by a battle between pure good and utter evil. Describing these mortal foes in 1951, he said "there are two sides whose composition cuts across national and even community boundaries." These forces, led by the U.S. and USSR, Pearson said, represented "freedom vs. slavery."^[26]



Anti-communist leaflet. [Source: pinbalking.blogspot.com]

Pearson also warned that a war between freedom and slavery would take place for one of only two reasons. World War III, he said, would result from an accident, or “a deliberate and controlled explosion brought about by the calculated policy of the hard-faced despots in the Kremlin, men hungry for power and world domination.”^[27]

Hypocrisy and Doublethink: “Free Europe” vs. “Free Quebec”

Pearson’s bombast also exaggerated Soviet control over what he slurred as their “completely servile” “puppet regimes.”^[28] When discussing nonaligned Yugoslavia, he referred to the “unquestioning and slavish obedience that the Kremlin demands.” With regard to Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, and “the subjugation of states by soviet communism,” Pearson spoke of “communist pressure to liquidate every element of national independence and every trace of opinion or feeling which is not abjectly subordinate to Soviet Russia.”^[29]

But Pearson was blind to the subservience of Canada and its NATO allies to the U.S. Pearson had such faith in Western morality that he declared in 1959 that “western democratic governments have no aggressive or imperialistic designs.” Similarly, he said “Americans ... are perhaps the least imperialistically minded people that have ever achieved great power

in the world.”^[30]

As *Canadian Dimension* magazine founder, Cy Gonnick, explained in 1975, “Canada’s role, as devised by Pearson, was to assist the United States to achieve its goals, which were by definition the same as Canada’s.” Canadian servility to the U.S. was summed up by a top Pearson colleague: “We can tell our neighbour when we think he is wrong,” said John Holmes, Canada’s chargé d’affaires in Moscow in 1947-1948 and a top bureaucrat at external affairs (starting in 1953 into the 1960s), “but we know that in the end we will, in our own interest, side with our neighbour right or wrong.”^[31]

In a speech in Vancouver in 1948, Pearson expressed faith that “democracy” in the U.S.-led “free world” had, by its treatment of the global poor, proven “its superiority as a form of government and a way of life.” Pearson then boiled everything down to the West’s existential struggle with evil. In one corner of the globe was America’s “free, expanding progressive democracy.” In the other, was the USSR’s “tyrannical and reactionary communism.”^[32]

The so-called free world countries, said Pearson, being “strong, healthy and progressive,” had to “protect themselves from the threat of a sudden attack by an aggressor communist state.” Pearson also believed the U.S.-led free world must “remove the menace of aggressive communism, at home ... [and] abroad.”^[33]

To “remove” the Red Menace, Pearson said Canada and other “free” nations had to “pay tribute” to the U.S. by foregoing their own independent foreign policies. He outlined this strategy to the elitist Empire Club of Canada and Toronto’s equally affluent Canadian Club by saying:

“we must recognize and pay tribute to the leadership being given and the efforts being made by the United States in the conflict against Communist imperialism, and realize that if this leadership were not given we would have little chance of success in the common struggle. Secondly, we must never forget that our enemy gleefully welcomes every division in the free democratic ranks and that ... there will be times when we should abandon our position if it is more important to maintain unity in the face of the common foe.”^[34]

Vive le Ukraine Libre

The hypocrisy of Cold War “doublethink”^[35] is illustrated by Pearson’s indignant reaction to Charles de Gaulle’s “Vive le Québec libre” speech in 1967. During his visit to Montréal for Canada’s centenary celebrations, the French president’s allusion to an independent Quebec outraged Prime Minister Pearson. De Gaulle’s reference to a “free Quebec” was nothing compared to the onslaught of “free Ukraine” propaganda that Canada had beamed at the USSR for the previous 15 years.

Under Pearson’s guidance, CBC International broadcasts had long provoked ethnonationalist schisms in the USSR. From its very first Ukrainian-language program, on Canada’s 85th birthday (July 1, 1952), the CBC’s Voice of Canada had collaborated with Canada’s far-right Ukrainian émigrés to drive a political wedge into the USSR.

Canada’s Cold War propaganda broadcasts were part of a U.S.-led political/psychological

warfare campaign to exploit internal Soviet conflicts and to foment the break-up of that extremely multicultural country.

Canada's mass media decried de Gaulle's call for a free Quebec. In covering the French president's speech, most newspapers across Canada quoted from Pearson's speech at a huge July 31, 1967 rally of anti-Soviet Ukrainian youth on Parliament Hill.^[36] (See photo.)

This rally of 1,500 uniformed, anti-communist Ukrainian youth marching in formation, was organized by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC).^[37]

It had been created by King's government in 1940 to unify Canada's right-wing Ukrainian groups. While the UCC regularly meddled in Soviet politics by demanding a "free Ukraine," it was happy to be used as a backdrop for Pearson to condemn de Gaulle's meddling in Canadian politics.



In 1967, Pearson used 1,500 uniformed Ukrainian youth as a backdrop to decry de Gaulle's "Vive le Québec libre" speech and to praise Canada's "two founding races." Another speaker, [Yuri Shymko](#), helped lead the Ukrainian youth movement which still glorifies Stepan Bandera as a hero. During WWII, Ukrainian scouting troops recruited for Bandera's fascist army and for the Waffen SS Galicia. These formations took part in killing Poles and Jews, and collaborated in the Nazi invasion of the USSR which killed 27 million Soviet citizens. [Source - Ukraine: A Captive but Unconquerable Nation, Bulletin of the World AntiCommunist League, June 1969; [diasporiana.org.au](#)]

In Pearson's speech, he acknowledged only "two founding races and languages and cultures in Canada, British and French." Ignoring Canada's genocide of First Nations, he also left out Britain's conquest of New France in 1760. "In our country," Pearson claimed, "we have required neither revolution nor civil war nor outside intervention to settle our differences."^[38]

These amnesic state myths were echoed by Yuri Shymko, who told the crowd:

"Canada is one of the few countries of the world that can proudly and justly say it has

maintained throughout its young history the principle that men of all races and nationalities shall live and prosper in peace, liberty and equality.”^[39]

Shymko was described in 1967 news stories as “a leader of the Ukrainian Youth Organization.” Then 26, he went on to become a member of parliament. Shymko continues to lead Ukrainian nationalists who glorify Stepan Bandera, a WWII fascist leader whose armed forces massacred Jews, Poles and communists.^[40]

Pearson’s “Full-Spectrum” Anti-Red Crusade

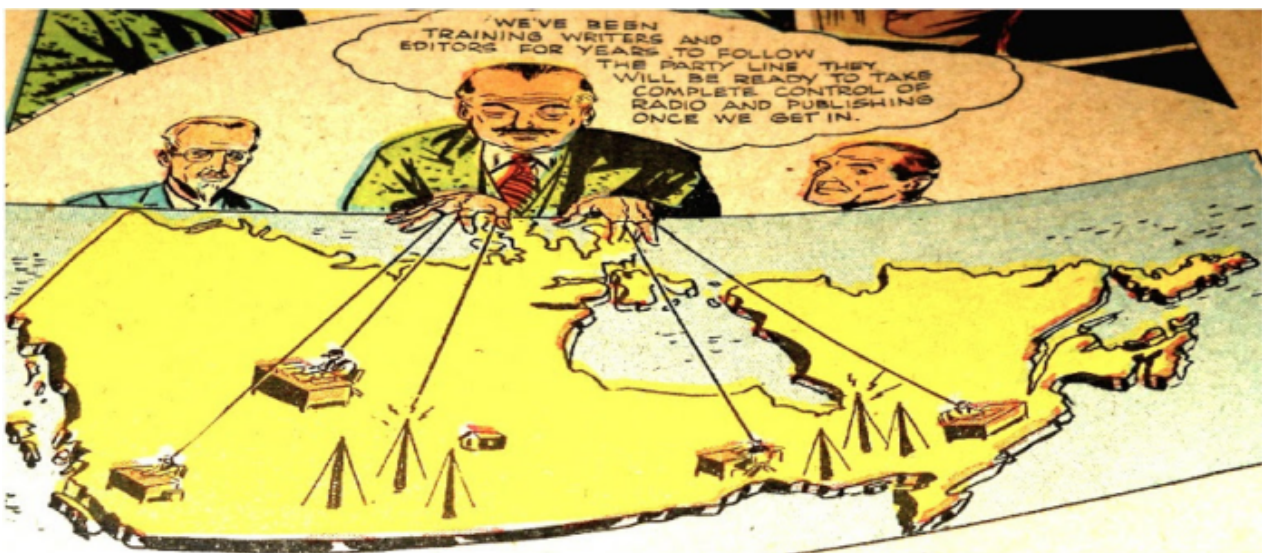
Pearson believed that Western civilization’s global war against communism had to be fought on all fronts, using weapons from all fields of culture. To amass the arsenal needed for this full-spectrum war, Pearson tailored his rhetoric to suit his audience. To his allies in Canada’s old boys’ clubs, he said the anti-communist struggle has not yet become a shooting war, except in Korea, but ... goes on in the field of economics, finance, and public opinion, and extends far beyond any military or even political operation.

“Strength,” he reminded this wealthy audience of corporate movers and shakers from the Empire Club of Canada and Toronto’s Canadian Club, should not “be interpreted in military terms alone, but has also its economic, financial and moral aspects.”^[41]

In 1952, Pearson became chancellor of his alma mater, Victoria College. In his speech, he focused on the need to fight the Reds using “intellectual and spiritual weapons”:

“It would be a mistake to believe we can ... defeat communism by force. Among other things, communism is an idea. No idea, however perilous or noxious, as communism is, can be killed by bayonets or even by an atomic bomb. As an idea, it must be resisted by intellectual and spiritual weapons....”^[42]

To fight his Cold War crusade against communism, Pearson often wielded Christian rhetoric. For instance, when promoting the creation of NATO in early 1949, he said “Canada should not remain aloof” because aggressive forces outside Canada allied to subversive forces within it ... [could] lead the world into war between totalitarian Communism and the Christian democratic way of life.^[43]



Comic promoting alleged Soviet plot to take over Canada. [Source: pinbalking.blogspot.com]

Having absorbed a zeal for imperialism thanks to the influence of his family, church and literature, Pearson grew to equate anti-communism with “spiritual faith” and “Christian morality.” These he saw as “the basis for the individual and for society.”^[44]



Lester Pearson at a conference in San Francisco in 1945 held by what subsequently became the UN.

[Source: thediscoverblog.com]

Within his black-and-white universe, the Cold War’s rivals were engaged in a mythic, existential battle between the evil darkness of totalitarian communism and the pure, radiance of civilized Western capitalism. This cartoon ethos left no room for grey areas in between. Canadians had to either embrace the enlightened “free world,” or be damned and condemned as diabolical Reds.

In one parliamentary polemic, Pearson contrasted the “dark practice of government through tyranny and ignorance” behind “the shadow of the iron curtain,” with the glowing “human

spirit” that made Europe the “fountainhead of light and progress” for “a thousand years.” Pearson’s melodramatic tropes shone when he said Europe’s “light still burns, and that eventually it will help lift the darkness that now surrounds it.”^[45]

Pearson and other Cold Warriors had zero-tolerance for communism. Their anti-Red phobia was akin to the “one-drop rule” that dominated the most racist societies. Apartheid regimes in South Africa and the U.S. institutionalized the hatred of their power elites in social systems that disempowered those alleged to have even a single drop of black African blood in their veins. Similarly, Cold Warriors like Pearson were intolerant of individuals, groups and foreign leaders said to be “tainted” by the dreaded “Red” political blood; “Pinkos” could not be tolerated. In the 1960s, it was known in Canada’s peace/anti-war movement that Pearson was a jingoistic Liberal war hawk, this is no longer the case. His image is now all but completely rehabilitated.

Despite his role in leading Canadian complicity in U.S./NATO-led wars and coups, Pearson is now heralded as an icon of peace by many Canadians who view themselves as progressives. This whitewashed invocation of Canada’s Pearsonian tradition is nowhere stronger than among the torchbearers of the Liberal Party.

For example, in 2017, when Canada’s current deputy prime minister, Chrystia Freeland, was foreign minister, she called Pearson a “Canadian icon” who promoted “peace, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law around the world.”^[46]

Her statement was made at a media event staged to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Pearson’s Nobel Peace Prize. This commemoration was co-sponsored by Canada’s Department of Global Affairs and Pearson College in British Columbia.

Pearson College is a private, government-funded^[47] boarding school for teens that is part of the prestigious United World College (UWC) movement. Alumni from its eighteen colleges on four continents have included youth who ended up becoming heads of state, CEOs, venture capitalists, religious and military leaders, celebrity artists, actors, powerful members of the Fifth Estate and Cold War Liberal hawks like Freeland herself.

As a precocious teen, Freeland’s Russophobic, anti-communist ideologies were strengthened by her two-year attendance at the UWC’s Adriatic College in Italy. She had already been ingrained in these belief systems by powerful influencers in her anti-Soviet Ukrainian-Canadian community and her family.^[48] These included Freeland’s maternal grandfather, Mikhailo Khomiak, who was given safe haven in Canada after working as Nazi Germany’s leading Ukrainian-language news propagandist in WWII.^[49]



Mikhailo Khomiak (to the right of the man smoking and immediately behind woman in headdress) with Nazi press administrator Emil Gassner, who is on the right, looking away. [Source: [peoplesvoice.ca](https://www.peoplesvoice.ca)]

Canada's Pearson College was the second of eighteen elite, international schools in the UWC network that was established by anti-communist admirers and military leaders of NATO's Defense College in Paris.^[50]



Statue of Lester Pearson on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. [Source: [waymarking.com](https://www.waymarking.com)]

But the exaltation of Pearson as Canada's most noble peace hero is not limited to the halls of government power or such elitist, pro-NATO institutions as Pearson College.

Remarkably, Pearson is now regarded with tremendous respect even by leading forces in Canada's mainstream peace movement. For example, Canada's largest and best-known

peace organization, Project Ploughshares, has effectively buried Pearson's role as a vociferous Cold War-monger and helped to construct the mythology that now surrounds and protects his name.

Although Ploughshares has for 45 years done much exemplary work, including the documentation of Canada's military exports, it has also helped to reverse the much-deserved, negative reputation that Pearson once had in the peace movement.

Mandated by, and accountable to, the Canadian Council of Churches, Ploughshares has received considerable financial support from this country's largest religious bodies and from Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative alike. (Since 1999, Ploughshares has received at least \$2.4 million in grants and contracts from the federal government.^[51])

Ploughshares' obfuscation of Pearson's imperialist, pro-war record is expressed in its internet presence. Of the 40 articles that reference Pearson within Ploughshares' website,^[52] none mention his promotion of U.S. coups and wars. Instead, the majority invoke his name in a positive light by mentioning the government-established Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, which trained military personnel from 1994 to 2013.

Only one article contains even a passing critique of Pearson's prowar legacy by briefly mentioning his role in arming Canadian missiles with U.S. nuclear warheads.^[53]

This 2009 article was written by then-retired Ploughshares co-founder Ernie Regehr who, two years later, accepted the UN Association of Canada's "Pearson Peace Medal." This award is given annually to a Canadian who has contributed to those causes to which Lester B. Pearson devoted his distinguished career: aid to the developing world; mediation between those confronting one another with arms; succour to refugees and others in need; equal rights and justice for all humanity; and peaceful change through world law and world organization.^[54]

The Ploughshares website highlights Regehr's receipt of this medal at the very top of a special webpage called "Milestones," which lists the group's greatest achievements. The only photo on this page shows Regehr receiving the medal from Canada's Governor General during a pomp-filled ceremony at his palace-like mansion in Ottawa.^[55] It also notes that the Pearson Peace Medal had been received by Ploughshares' other co-founder, Murray Thomson, 21 years earlier from another governor general.

Ploughshares' "Milestones" page also notes that Regehr accepted the World Peace Award from the World Federalists of Canada.^[56] The first recipient of this award was Lester Pearson himself in 1972.

The World Peace Award (in 2001) and the Pearson Peace Medal (in 2017) were bestowed upon Lloyd Axworthy,^[57] who was the Liberal's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade during Canada's active participation in the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999. Axworthy, who—like Freeland—carries on the Pearsonian war-hawk tradition, oversaw the export of billions of dollars' worth of Canadian weapons systems to the U.S. and dozens of other countries. He, like Pearson, has received considerable praise in the pages of Ploughshares' website.

Despite Pearson's long career of promoting the multifarious crimes of empire, his status as a Canadian peace-cult hero seems unlikely to be revoked anytime soon. Still glorified by the corporate media, politicians of all stripes, and even the peace movement, Pearson remains a seemingly irremovable fixture in the mythology of Canada, "the peaceable kingdom."

However, as the foreign affairs bureaucrat, diplomat and political leader who spearheaded the warmongering, social phobia of extreme anti-communism in post-war Canada, Pearson will eventually be widely recognized as a godfather of the Cold War and an ideological patriarch of its hate-filled propaganda.

*

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Richard Sanders is an anti-war activist and writer in Canada. In 1984, he received an MA in cultural anthropology and began working to expose Canada's complicity in U.S.-led wars. In 1989, he founded the [Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade](#) (COAT), which led to a 20-year municipal ban on Ottawa's arms bazaars.

Notes

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[47] Pearson College has received at least \$14.18 million in government grants since 1995. (This figure, adjusted for inflation, is the value of these grants in 2021 dollars.)

Public Accounts of Canada, https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/public_accounts_can/pdf/index.html

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\$4 million (1997-98) (\$6.08 in 2021 dollars)

\$5 million (1994-95) (\$7.98 in 2021 dollars)

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Featured image: Lester B. Pearson with John F. Kennedy. Pearson played a founding role in NATO (1949) and was former Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs from 1948 to 1957. As leader of Canada's Liberal Party from 1958 to 1968, he was Prime Minister from 1963 to 1968. [Source: natoassociation.ca]

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