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THE MAKING OF A DIPLOMAT: LESTER B. PEARSON AT CANADA HOUSE LONDON, 1935 TO 1941

Gregory Scott Finney: Manchester Metropolitan University

Abstract

Canada House, in Trafalgar Square, London, is where the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom has their diplomatic headquarters. Lester B. Pearson predominantly worked there from 1935 to 1941. Pearson was the only Canadian to win the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in resolving the Suez Crisis, in 1957, and was the Canadian Prime Minister from 1963 to 1968. This article argues that Pearson's time working at Canada House focused his diplomatic skill set around managing Anglo-Canadian relations that respected both Canadian independence and conditional Canadian loyalty towards the British government; as opposed to behaving as a subordinate British colony. Pearson also learned to remain resolute in the face of seemingly impossible challenges, from the British collective approach to dealing with and managing World War II; a skill that would assist him through his political and diplomatic career. These events enabled him to develop some of the key characteristics of what the late diplomatic historian Harold Nicolson called the ideal diplomat: good temper, precision, calm, loyalty, and patience. As such, his time in Britain should be recognised for its significance to his future career and to Canada's approach to world affairs as the country emerged from the shadow of the British Empire.

Keywords

Lester B. Pearson; Diplomacy; Canada House, London; Vincent Massey

Introduction: Learning to respect London and the British people

Lester B. Pearson was Canada's Prime Minister from 1963 to 1968. Prior to that, he served as Secretary of State for External Affairs, and would become Canada's only Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1957 (Pearson, 1973, pp. 3-277) (Ferguson, 1999, p. 267). As one of Canada's most accomplished diplomats, his long career involved time working at the League of Nations, United Nations and in Washington, D.C. Additionally, Pearson represented Canada at Canada House in London, England (Cook and Belanger, 2007, pp. 390-410). This article focuses on Pearson's time from 1935 to 1941 at Canada House, the development of his diplomatic skill set, and the motivation to use this skill set to accomplish the objectives of security, prosperity, and human rights around the world (McKercher and Perras, 2017, p. 28; Nicolson, 1963, pp. 104-122; Anderson, 2018, pp. 94-95).

Canadian historiographic literature has identified the need for greater contributions to Canadian diplomatic history in order to further understand the given subject matter. In 2010, Adam Chapnick wrote in the *Canadian Historical Review* regarding a younger generation of Canadian historians and diplomatic history, stating that they were 'most notable for their disconnect from the contemporary historical establishment' (Chapnick, 2010, p. 730; Chapnick 2015, pp. 577-578). He then wrote another article for the *Canadian Historical Review* in 2015, stating that things had changed for the better thanks to the efforts of the Canadian Historical Association's Political History Group. In order for that trend to continue, he believed there had to be an ongoing cross-collaborative effort to produce more insightful historiographic literature on Canadian Diplomatic history (Chapnick, 2015, pp. 576-578). In the spirit of helping to promote the study of Canadian foreign policy, this article strives to fill some of the gaps in Lester B. Pearson's early diplomatic career through a careful examination of Anglo-Canadian relations, and elucidate the early development of one of Canada's most well-known diplomats and historic figures.

Pearson was born in April of 1897 and had an upper middle-class upbringing as the son of a Methodist Minister living on Yonge Street in Newtonbrook, now a part of the city of Toronto. He was raised by a kind, friendly father who was respected in his community (Pearson, 1972, pp. 3-10). Pearson also stated that when his parents married, his father had 'three country churches for his parish, a large brick house for a parsonage, and a few hundred dollars a year supplemented by contributions in kind for an income' (Pearson, 1972, p. 7). Additionally, Pearson described how his mother had 'been brought up in a comfortable home, with a good education befitting a young lady of her time' (Pearson, 1972, p. 7).

While attending the University of Oxford and living in the United Kingdom prior to 1935, Pearson established helpful connections: 'I also had some old Oxford friends, as well as Canadians, living and working in London with whom we had many a happy time' (Pearson, 1972, pp. 106-107). This early time at Oxford, before working at Canada House, was described by him as very enriching and rewarding, and allowed him to attain Bachelors' and Masters' Degrees and to develop admiration and loyalty for the United Kingdom and its people (Pearson, 1972, pp. 44-50). Pearson's experiences in London, combined with his past experiences at Oxford, contributed to stronger Anglo-Canadian relations.

Pearson's time at Canada House was significant for three main reasons. First, he developed the diplomatic skill set needed for the international stage, which he would later use to contribute to the resolution of the Suez Crisis, and ultimately that would win him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 (Pearson, 1973, pp. 3-277; Ferguson, 1999, p. 267). Pearson would state of his time at Canada House that: 'I worked hard and dutifully at Canada House' (Pearson, 1972, p. 103). Second, he developed a great appreciation of the British collective mentality of staying calm and good tempered in a crisis, such as World War II; a skill that he would utilise to his advantage throughout his diplomatic and political career (Pearson, 1972, pp. 141-142; Nicolson, 1963, 104-117). Pearson would describe how at the outbreak of World War II in London the 'British were great settlers down, and in London it soon seemed like business and pleasure as usual'(Pearson, 1972, p. 141). His admiration for their ability to remain calm in a crisis was stated on multiple occasions in his memoirs, diaries, and other writings regarding his time at Canada House. Third, his survival of the Nazi aerial bombardment of London strengthened his resolve to work for world peace in future decades.

On a Sunday in the summer of 1940, he and colleague George Ignatieff witnessed the bombing of Whitehall from the roof of Canada House at Trafalgar Square. When Pearson saw the flames all around him, he told Ignatieff civilisation could not stand this much destruction for much longer, and that they would have to try and stop it. Ignatieff also noted that this was one of the few moments in which Pearson had ever articulated his personal feelings (Anderson, 2018, pp. 94-95). This was an event Pearson would later speak of when winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957 (Pearson, 1964, p. 5). It represented a key moment in which Pearson expressed a dedication to the use of his diplomatic skill set to work for peace and security in the conduct of international affairs. Pearson stated its significance in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech: 'Any words I may have to say about peace are based on the framework of my own personal experience' (Pearson, 1964, p. 4). Pearson dedicated multiple decades to the use of a diplomatic skill set in accomplishing peace.

Vincent Massey, the Canadian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom from 1935 to 1946, expressed a confidence in Pearson, which began prior to his appointment at Canada House (Massey, 1963, p. 224). Massey's grandfather left money in his will for the building of the American University in Washington, and the University then set up travel endowments. (Massey, 1963, p. 60). For twenty years, from 1920 to 1940, Massey and his wife chose Canadian students from the University of Toronto whom they thought 'showed the greatest promise of achievement in later life. How often we were fortunate enough to hit the target, the names of successful candidates would show. Among them were Lester Pearson' (Massey, 1963, p. 60). Massey named Pearson specifically to describe how he and his wife choose what they saw as successful candidates (Massey, 1963, p. 60 and Rae 1997, pp. IX-23). Massey also had a similar University and academic career to Pearson. They both studied history for two years at Oxford and spent five years in the history department at the University of Toronto (Bissell, 1986, p. 54). Massey was pleased when his new position as Canada High Commissioner to the United Kingdom was greeted with what he thought was the positive news that Pearson would be joining him at Canada House. He described Pearson in the following terms: 'When I took the post in 1935, I was lucky to find as the two senior members of the staff Georges Vanier and L. B. Pearson-able colleagues and warm

friends, both of them. No chief could have been more grateful than I was for what they did' (Massey, 1963, p. 224). Pearson thus started a new chapter in a long career in politics and diplomacy which would see him develop an exceptional diplomatic skill set, and greater understanding of conditional loyalty, with the idea that the British would treat Canada as an independent partner, and not a subordinate colony (Pearson, 1972, p. 150).

In the summer of 1935, Pearson learned that he had a change in work position, and he was going to be sent to London, England (Pearson, 1972, p. 102). He arrived in London in October 1935, after previously working in Geneva, Switzerland (Pearson, 1972, p. 103). Pearson wrote in Volume One of his memoirs that he first struggled to negotiate his salary with Canadian officials, but eventually secured one higher than what he had wanted, at \$8000 dollars a year (Pearson, 1972, pp. 102). He also reported that his family struggled to find an affordable place to rent in a good location in London: 'After some false starts, however, and a few depressing weeks, we found a suitable, if temporary, house in Hampstead, with two private day schools nearby, one for boys and one for girls' (Pearson, 1972, p. 103). The family very quickly 'loved London and the British Isles. We came to know the fascination of the great city and the quiet beauty of the countryside; to appreciate the courteous manners of the people, and value their ancient and cherished traditions' (Pearson, 1972, p. 103). Pearson went on to state: 'I have always since considered London the only great city in the world fit to live in' (Pearson, 1972, p. 103). Pearson's experience of falling in love with London, the British people, and the British countryside quickly demonstrated what Harold Nicolson described as an attribute of a great diplomat, a good temper (Nicolson, 1963, p. 117).

As Nicolson (1963, p. 117) stated in the 3rd edition of his book *Diplomacy*, being calm is something that should be expressed in two different ways. One is to be good tempered, or be able to keep a bad temper under control. The second is to demonstrate exceptional patience, due to the fact that diplomats who had in the past lost their tempers were remembered with serious distaste and shock by future generations. Pearson developed a good temper and a great love of London, which helped reduce his chances of hurting Anglo-Canadian relations. Pearson (1972, p. 106) summarized this feeling by stating: 'Canada House itself was a good place for work; there in the centre of London at Trafalgar Square, with Nelson and the pigeons to keep an eye on us.'

Developing insight into Anglo-Canadian Relations through interpersonal interactions

Initially, Pearson settled for no official job title, which was possibly due to the fact that Vincent Massey 'was, I knew, anxious to organize Canada House more as a diplomatic mission than as a government department abroad and my appointment would, it was thought, fit neatly into that concept' (Pearson, 1972, pp. 107-108). Pearson was patient and understanding about this situation, and quickly immersed himself into diplomatic networking, taking the time to get to know people, and build strong relations with those around him. In addition to Canada House, he got to know his colleagues in the Foreign and Dominion Offices, many of whom became his very good friends, which he described as making his work easier and more productive (Pearson, 1972, p. 106). He also made it a priority to get to know as many people in the press as possible who were Canadian, British,

and American (Pearson, 1972, p. 107). He spent time at Whitehall speaking with various government officials during both business hours, and at dinner parties or weekend visits (Pearson, 1972, p. 108). He stated that his success in this relationship building mainly occurred 'in doing this at the right kind of dinner party or on a weekend visit than by visiting Whitehall, where my contacts were largely in the Foreign and Dominions Offices' (Pearson, 1972, p. 108).

In describing the Foreign Office, Pearson stated that it 'was the Holy of Holies, occupied by an aristocratic, well-endowed elite who formed part of the British diplomatic service, and who saw to it that the imperial interest was protected and enlarged in accord with policies worked out in their high-ceilinged, frescoed, Victorian offices' (Pearson, 1972, p. 108). Pearson provided a nuanced analysis, by stating that these people were also knowledgeable, intelligent, and efficient at their work (Pearson, 1972, p. 108). He noted that members of the Foreign Office were very kind to him regardless of their age, and he was able to be on good terms with them, and in return for his kindness and patience, he was able to keep well informed on Whitehall government affairs (Pearson, 1972, p. 108). Multiple members of the Foreign Office trusted him and showed him telegrams and communications, which Pearson stated 'might contain references to the policies or lack of policies of the Canadian government. As a result, I was able to help my High Commissioner to keep informed on developments in foreign policy, and he was thus, I hope better posted to inform Ottawa' (Pearson, 1972, p. 108). In these early days at Canada House, Pearson's approach to winning over friends and colleagues, and the comfort he felt while working with members of the British upper classes, was a testament to his growth as a diplomat and his patient, good tempered mentality that allowed him to do his job with greater precision. Additionally, dedication was a characteristic he used in his writings when describing his time working in London. He described how he was both enthusiastic and dedicated in the work he was doing, which were key attributes to the development of his diplomatic skill set (Pearson, 1972, p. 108).

In the process of putting these skills to work, Pearson was also introduced to a more in-depth understanding of the evolving nature of Anglo-Canadian relations. His memoirs stated:

Shortly after I joined Canada House, on 6 November 1935 (the new Liberal government had just gained power), Dr. Skelton instructed me by letter not to seek any greater access to British information than was given to the second man in the High Commissioner's office in Ottawa. He did not want me to take any responsibility for reporting anything to my High Commissioner, let alone to Ottawa, that the British might want us to know merely for their own purposes (Pearson, 1972, p. 109).

Dr. Skelton was one of the highest Canadian government authorities on Canadian foreign policy, as his official title was to be the new lead of the Department of External Affairs (Hutchison, 1964, p. 355). Pearson believed there were two reasons for the warning about getting too close to Whitehall officials. The first was a concern that Pearson himself could be drawn into the 'Whitehall net'. Also, after 1931, he argued:

One of our main preoccupations at Canada House, in fact, was over Ottawa's increasing worry about becoming too involved in British policy. Canada's newly won independence within the Commonwealth must be protected against the wiles of Downing Street and Whitehall. The concept of 'our Empire' and 'our dominions' died hard in Britain (Pearson, 1972, p. 109).

His colleagues and superiors in the government of Canada noticed Pearson's enthusiastic use of his diplomatic skill set, perhaps combined with some natural talent; but it clearly came with a warning against losing sight of Canada's national interests. In other words, Pearson was learning that conditional loyalty to the British was the new Canadian way.

Pearson began to be noticed by the right people, and Vincent Massey wrote a letter to Brook Claxton on January 17th, 1936, stating that 'Fortunately, I have Pearson on my staff now. His duties are almost entirely diplomatic, and he is, as you know, extremely able' (Massey, 1963, p. 228). In addition, Alice Massey, Vincent's wife, wrote in 1936 to her sister about her husband and Pearson saying that 'You simply can't think how much in the intricacies of things large and small Mike Pearson means to Vincent. Mike has a magnificent brain, and he and Vincent think very much on the same lines' (English, 1989, pp. 193-194, and Bissell, 1986, p. 56). Pearson's skill set and reputation were acknowledged by the Massey's, and many others he worked with. This in turn would increase the ability for Pearson to move up the diplomatic ladder of influence, in relation to advancing future Canadian foreign policy interests and contributing towards the resolution of global problems.

In addition to this, Pearson also felt a sense of happiness at making some changes that he felt were important in the day-to-day operations at Canada House:

There was, of course, also a large Trade and Commerce division at Canada House under an able and experienced head, Frederic Hudd, as there were officers of other departments of the Canadian government. But there was little integration and coordination of duties. This was to come later, and I was privileged to have something to do with bringing it about (Pearson, 1972, p. 107).

This was a key moment for Pearson in developing precision (Nicolson, 1963, pp. 104-117). He had put together a precise understanding of how the Canadian administrative bureaucracy could operate more efficiently in relation to the conduct of Anglo-Canadian diplomacy. Pearson also received the strong support of Massey by writing a memorandum on the organisation of the Political Section of Canada House, in which Pearson proposed restructuring in two ways: one would give the High Commissioner's office a central role in the exchange of political and diplomatic content between the British and Canadian governments, and the second would call for an official policy of notifying the High Commissioner's office of any important development in relation to Canada-U.K. relations (Bissell, 1986, pp. 55-56).

Another important aspect of Anglo-Canadian relations, which Pearson both observed and participated in firsthand in order to better understand the British, was the Coronation of a new King. Pearson described how this was the most dramatic event he had witnessed,

besides the outbreak of the Second World War (Pearson, 1972, pp. 109-110). In describing this step-by-step process, Pearson noted: 'On the evening of 21 January 1936 I read in black letters on a newspaper hoarding: 'The King's life is drawing peacefully to its close.' He had served his people with sincerity and devotion, and the outpouring of grief when he died was deep and genuine' (Pearson, 1972, p. 110). This triggered a transition period for the British monarchy in which King George V's death was followed by the establishment of a successor, King Edward VIII. However, this was short lived, as Edward chose to abdicate his responsibilities for a marriage to Wallis Warfield Simpson, who was a divorcee, a violation of the mores of the time (Sharp, 1987, pp. 187-212). For Edward's successor, George VI, Pearson obtained a front row seat to a historic coronation at Westminster Abbey; and a greater understanding of the importance of tradition, ritual and pageantry to the British (Pearson, 1972, pp. 110-111). Pearson reported that: 'With the developments that followed, Canada House had some connection, although the channel for policy communications in a matter of such unprecedented delicacy as an abdication was often from Prime Minister to Prime Minister direct' (Pearson, 1972, p. 110). This line of communication was one thing that Pearson wished to see change during his time in London, as he felt that Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King was vastly over reliant on it.

With the British Monarchy's transition crisis, Pearson observed and noted Canadian Prime Minister King's views on the situation. King did not want Canada to stop its support for the British monarch, and he did concur with British Prime Minister Baldwin on what had to be done (Pearson, 1972, p. 111). Pearson was by all appearances describing that Prime Minister King agreed with the beliefs of the time that the King of the British Monarchy should not marry a divorcee. And while Pearson did not state his own views, he seemed unconcerned about the issue one way or the other. He never objected to the course of action leading to a new coronation, but never endorsed it either. With the decision to crown the new King George VI, Pearson continued to develop his precision (Nicholson, 1963, p. 104). Nicholson described such precision:

If truthfulness be the first essential for the ideal diplomatist, the second essential is precision. By this is meant not merely intellectual accuracy, but moral accuracy. The negotiator should be accurate both in mind and soul. The professional diplomatist is inured, from his earliest days as an attaché, to rules of precision (Nicholson, 1963, p. 112).

This process of being in touch with rules of precision was likely a large part of what Pearson took from the transition of George VI to the throne (Pearson, 1972, p. 111). Pearson described it in the following terms:

When the moment arrived for the abdication to take effect legally by formal action in the House of Lords in London, it was essential that similar action at the same moment take place in Ottawa and other overseas capitals. Otherwise, there would be a constitutional vacuum. We worked out an elaborate system of communications, a 'count-down' which in its precision would have been adequate to launch a moon-rocket. I was to be stationed at Westminster Hall and a telephone line was kept open to Canada House. I could tell the High Commissioner the very second the formal change had been

made (Pearson, 1972, p. 111).

Pearson goes on to describe how it worked in every Commonwealth capital very effectively, except for Dublin (Pearson, 1972, p. 111). He knew it was important to get right, in order to avoid an international embarrassment, and a potential Anglo-Canadian conflict in the aftermath (Pearson, 1972, p. 111).

The transition process had two defining moments for Pearson, which taught him about the significance of sensitivity to seemingly trivial details: a dispute with the King's Private Secretary over a new vehicle, and his role as an usher at the coronation ceremony (Pearson, 1972, pp. 111-118). In relation to the King's vehicle ownership rift, Pearson noted that: 'The determination to 'repatriate' the monarchy into the solid and respectable comfort of English nineteenth-century traditions and mores occasionally expressed itself in exaggerated and even rather ridiculous forms' (Pearson, 1972, p. 111). King George, after his accession had 'decided to ride only in English-built motor cars, thus reversing the precedent of Edward VIII who had had the effrontery to purchase and use a car made by General Motors in Canada' (Pearson, 1972, p. 112). Pearson would later question the King's Private Secretary about this decision, describing how he felt he had an obligation to clearly protest that the King's popularity would diminish in parts of Ontario, such as Oshawa, where these automobiles were being built, and he was told he needed to calm down (Pearson, 1972, p. 112). The King's secretary would also go on to say that the car was not Canadian, but just made in Canada by an American company (Pearson, 1972, p. 112). This moment was also significant for Pearson, as he demonstrated a dedication to Canada, and a willingness to use his diplomatic skills to advance Canada's interests in a time of newly developed Canadian independence.

The formal coronation ceremony of King George VI was to occur on May 1st, 1937. In describing this, Pearson stated: 'Of a lower order of significance, but more important to me personally, was the decision that I, with three other Canadians, should be ushers inside Westminster Abbey for the coronation service itself; or rather, because it would never do to use such a plebeian expression as usher, we should be 'Gold Sticks in Waiting'' (Pearson, 1972, p. 113). Additionally, Pearson was responsible for looking after Canadian visitors and answering any questions that would arise (Pearson, 1972, p. 113). Two complicated matters arose. Getting Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P) horses to London early would not work, and the horse contingent would need special training for the new noises that would be encountered during the coronation (Pearson, 1972, p. 114). In addition to the thousands of Canadian visitors prior to the coronation that made Canada House a 'madhouse', Pearson and the Canada House staff also dealt with a unique problem: 'With us, one [crisis] arose out of the timber that went into the stand we built around Canada House to accommodate four or five hundred of the more favoured Canadian visitors. It was nicely decorated by bunting in colour scheme of dirty green and drab russet with an occasional nondescript silver maple leaf pasted on it' (Pearson, 1972, p. 114). Pearson recalled an issue and potential crisis: 'an angry Canadian timber commissioner rushed into my office, speechless with indignation, gasping that he had found, on inspection, that Swedish, even Russian, timber was being used. This could have led to a crisis. If a headline appeared in Canadian newspapers 'Soviet timber used in Canada's coronation stand,' it might mean the end of the Commonwealth or, at the least, the end of one Commonwealth government' (Pearson,

1972, p. 114). But as Pearson goes on to describe, the crisis was averted when they were able to remove the timber from Sweden and Russia, which prevented what Pearson stated as Communist contamination, leading to a sense of relief (Pearson, 1972, p. 114). This experience increased Pearson's understanding that sensitivity to trivial details mattered in the conduct of diplomacy, and that he could use humour to help cope with any potential crisis in diplomacy and politics.

In the leadup to the coronation, Pearson prepared for his duties as an usher at Westminster Abbey. He described the rehearsals as quite humorous, and he did a lot of standing around and watching (Pearson, 1972, p. 115). His final rehearsal had a different tone and focus: 'The last rehearsal, however, the day before The Day, was deadly serious. We clustered in the cloisters of the Abbey around our commanding officer who gave us final operation orders with a few solemn words of inspiration: 'England expects that tomorrow every man will do his duty'' (Pearson, 1972, p. 114). Pearson arrived at the Abbey on the morning of the coronation at 4:30 a.m., in expectation of his duties. He was to be behind a pillar with no view of the coronation, so Pearson and a colleague from South Africa found a place where they could see. There was a risk of formal reprimand for their actions (Pearson, 1972, p. 116). They both witnessed the Crowning of the King and Queen without any trouble or issues (Pearson, 1972, p. 116). For Pearson's diplomatic career, all this mattered, because he developed an understanding of the attention to detail required to properly conduct Anglo-Canadian relations, particularly around Coronation procedures and interpersonal interactions. His superior, Vincent Massey, had expressed very strong admiration and joy regarding the ceremony, and his presence was likened to a person from a stained-glass window from the English Middle Ages (Bissell, 1986, pp. 9-10). Massey's wife noted that they were awake at 4:30 a.m. and arrived at Westminster Abbey at 6:30 a.m. to attend the ceremonies (Bissell, 1986, p. 10). The Canadian diplomatic delegation demonstrated strong dedication to Anglo-Canadian relations, with all their duties fulfilled on that day.

The leadup to World War II

Despite the early positive times that Pearson experienced in Britain and at Canada House, there was, as Winston Churchill would use in the title of one of his books, a 'gathering storm' in the late 1930s during the lead up to the outbreak of World War II (Churchill, 1948). Pearson's biggest complaint in this timeframe revolved around Ottawa, not Whitehall: 'We often felt, this is a common complaint of diplomatic officers abroad, that our despatches were ignored and that we might as well have mailed a batch of local press clippings' (Pearson, 1972, p. 109). At the time of the May 1937 Coronation there was to be an Imperial Conference held in London. While some members of the Canadian delegation had complained that the hotels they stayed at were not of a high enough standard, Pearson blamed the Canadian government for not communicating the accommodation requests until the last minute (Pearson, 1972, p. 119). In relation to the conference, Pearson stated that 'The conference itself proceeded without incident, overshadowed by the coronation. Mr. King succeeded in listening to and talking about reports of dangerous European developments without committing himself or the Canadian government to anything or making any concessions to the idea of a common foreign or defence policy, in spite of the visibly gathering clouds on the horizon' (Pearson, 1972, p. 120).

In speaking about the state of Europe in May of 1937, Pearson felt 'Disillusioned by the double-dealing and double-talking of the British and French, as they deserted collective security, I saw no reason why Canada should become involved in Anglo-French manoeuvres to protect themselves against Nazi Germany' (Pearson, 1972, p. 120). The Canadian government's response to the dangerous developments was to ignore the rising tension, and not get involved. Pearson appeared to be striving to understand with as much precision as possible what was happening. He described how the United Kingdom and France protested against German rearmament, and how after talks in 1935 the United Kingdom had imposed sanctions on Nazi Germany's navy. Pearson also stated how 'In spite of the three-power declaration of solidarity against the Nazis made at the Stresa Conference in April 1936, the UK accepted a month later as permanent and definite 100-35 naval ratio with the Nazis which Sir John Simon, then Foreign Secretary, had summarily rejected when Hitler tried it on him during his visit to Berlin shortly before' (Pearson, 1972, p. 120). Pearson also observed first-hand Anglo-Canadian meetings which further discussed the evolving situation in relation to Nazi Germany in the lead up to the war. This was a significant part of Pearson's development as a diplomat, as it advanced his understanding of complex international problems and their impact on the Anglo-Canadian relationship; in particular what the British and Canadians would agree to do jointly or separately to address the threat of the Nazi menace.

On this point, Pearson described how a major issue of Anglo-Canadian discussion was the 'Nazi violation of the Treaty of Versailles, the reoccupation of the Rhineland in March of 1936' (Pearson, 1972, p. 122). During the discussion, the idea emerged that the French and British should demand that German troops be ordered out of the Rhineland under the threat of war against Germany. Pearson stated: 'I was one of the great majority in Britain and Canada who condemned such a threat as war-mongering. I agreed with the *London Times* as it thundered against a strong anti-Nazi policy and emphasized the danger of precipitate action against a Germany which, however deplorable its regime, was trying merely to free itself from some of the worst shackles of an unjust treaty' (Pearson, 1972, p. 122). Pearson, along with the Canadian government and its foreign policy of the time, showed loyalty to the British policy of the day, and towards sustaining Anglo-Canadian relations at the time of the Nazi occupation of the Rhineland.

Further meetings attended by Pearson in March of 1936 sustained the Anglo-Canadian solidarity on appeasement. Pearson described a time when an editor at the *Times* and an old Balliol college classmate of Vincent Massey 'came over to Canada House to persuade the High Commissioner to suggest to Mr. King that he send a message to Mr. Baldwin warning him that Canada would not support any strong or rash action against the Nazis over the occupation of the Rhineland' (Pearson, 1972, p. 122). Massey sent a message to Mackenzie King on March 13th supporting that course of action. King's reply was that any communication of coordinated action would be determined from Prime Minister to Prime Minister through written communication. Pearson also noted how the Prime Minister's view was that 'though he strongly opposed any strong British and French reaction to the occupation of the Rhineland, [he] decided that Canada should keep out of this business' (Pearson, 1972, pp. 122-123). From the standpoint of developing a diplomatic characteristic, Pearson seemed to be focused on promoting Anglo-Canadian loyalty through support for appeasement (Nicholson, 1963, pp. 104- 122). In describing loyalty, Nicholson

stated how 'The professional diplomatist is governed by several different, and at times conflicting, loyalties. He owes loyalty to his own sovereign, government, minister and foreign office; he owes loyalty to his own staff; he owes a form of loyalty to the diplomatic body in the capital where he resides' (Nicholson, 1963, p. 122). An examination of the evidence presented so far shows Anglo-Canadian relations were working very cohesively; Pearson was a loyal diplomat to the Anglo-Canadian policy of the day, for better or for worse.

Pearson's evolution in thinking about the situation was described in great detail in his memoirs. He stated, after describing this Anglo-Canadian solidarity for appeasement, that 'My own views began to change before the next Nazi move, the occupation of Austria in 1938' (Pearson, 1972, p. 123). Pearson further observed: 'No longer was it possible for me to believe that Nazism was a temporary aberration in German politics, that the good sense of the German people would soon take care of the Fuhrer, and that the greater danger to peace was French over-reaction to Hitler's moves, with the United Kingdom supporting such reaction' (Pearson, 1972, p. 123). This shift should not be attributed to Pearson alone, as the Prime Ministers that he served under would eventually experience the same. Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King, although much slower to come to this realisation than Pearson, did make a public statement on March 20, 1939 in which he made clear that if there was an attack launched against Britain, there would be no doubt that the Canadian government and people would come to the defence of the United Kingdom (Teigrob, 2019, pp. 5-212). After a 1937 visit from King, in which he expressed morbid and sinister admiration for the Nazi intelligentsia, King had come to finally realise the evil menace of the Nazis, and that support for the British was inevitable (Teigrob, 2019, pp. 5-212). Additionally, Pearson served under Louis St. Laurent after the war, who would become King's successor as Prime Minister in 1948. St. Laurent also promoted a policy of internationalism, and was a big supporter of the United Nations and the development of N.A.T.O (Thomson, 1967, pp. 169-218). On June 22nd, 1945, King and St. Laurent would fly together to San Francisco to sign the United Nations Charter (Thomson, 1967, p. 170).

Pearson once described a flashback he had, to March of 1937 and a dinner where a guest speaker was to talk about the rise of the Nazi menace. The guest was Winston Churchill, and in describing the future Prime Minister, Pearson stated how 'During the dinner and afterwards Churchill talked with eloquence and passion about the 'gathering storm' and the need to stand up to the 'loathsome Nazis' and their Fuhrer' (Pearson, 1972, p. 126). Furthermore, Pearson noted of Churchill that 'He was passionate about the need to push on vigorously with rearmament, to arrange for full military cooperation with the French, and to establish working arrangements with Russia' (Pearson, 1972, p. 126). Pearson's observations of Churchill made a strong impression, and he seemed to realise that the growing threat was quite likely to impact Anglo-Canadian cooperation in the very near future, and lead to an eventual abandonment of appeasement as a policy towards Nazi Germany. This growing sense of allied, Anglo-Canadian unity was part of the growth of the idea that would become a defining characteristic of post-World War II relations; Anglo-Canadian cohesion to spread democracy and peace.

The Outbreak of the Second World War and Anglo-Canadian relations

In describing his time at Canada House from 1935-1939, Pearson stated how 'These were good years and exciting years for the Pearson family until, like so much else, they came to an unhappy close in 1939' (Pearson, 1972, p. 107). Pearson drew attention to major points in his September 26th, 1939, diary entry in relation to British Prime Minister Chamberlain: 'Mr. Chamberlain may have been a tardy convert to the view that Hitler can never be trusted but he has become 110 per cent converted. He is possessed now of only one idea-the Nazis must be destroyed. He is a determined, obstinate old man of limited vision and, I believe, with a limited tenure of office' (Pearson, 1972, p. 142). Before he left office, Pearson and Canada House were very busy working on Anglo-Canadian relations and war policy. Pearson had a new role in Canada House by 1939, which was the Chief of Staff to Vincent Massey. In this role, Pearson witnessed the outbreak of World War II on September 1st, 1939 (Churchill, 1948, p. 444), Churchill becoming the British Prime Minister (Churchill, 1948, pp. 662-663, 666-667). Also, the fall of France to Nazi rule (Churchill, 1948, pp. 224-238). In reviewing his personal diaries from his time at Canada House for the publication of his memoirs, Pearson presented his views of the British resolve during the outbreak of the war by describing his movie theatre visit on September 21st, 1939: 'A notice was shown on the screen telling patrons what to do and where to go if there was an air-raid. It closed with this gem, 'Above all, don't panic-Remember YOU ARE BRITISH.' There was a burst of raucous laughter from the audience, which restored my faith in the British' (Pearson, 1972, pp. 141-142). Pearson's admiration of their good temper in the face of crisis was a skill he would emulate in the years ahead.

A visit to Canada House by the King and Queen on 17th October 1940 helped to strengthen Anglo-Canadian relations as the crises of the Second World War continued to unfold. Pearson noted how 'A happier contact for Canada House was made by a visit of the King and Queen on 17 October. By this time, we had established a good working organization for our new wartime duties and our morale was high-as it remained throughout the war' (Pearson, 1972, p. 144).

This formal visit after the outbreak of the Second World War was part of the important contact and communication required to sustain close Anglo-Canadian relations in order to deal with the harsh and brutal realities of the war. Despite recent and strong Anglo-Canadian relations, a major strain arose around what to do about wheat production. Canadians were asking for a year-long contract at 93 cents a bushel. The reply from British diplomat Sir John Simon was that he felt the Canadian representative, Mr. Crerar, would just go back to his prairie constituents in Canada and make fun of the British for how he got a one-sided deal out of them that disproportionately benefitted the Canadians (Pearson, 1972, p. 145). Pearson went on to note how the issue was then addressed by Canadian Prime Minister King, who preferred to deal with the situation through more direct communication with British Prime Minister Chamberlain; this was King's methodological approach to conducting Anglo-Canadian relations at the time. Additionally, Pearson noted how King had become increasingly suspicious of his ambassador to the U.K. Vincent Massey, who in the view of King had become 'too close to the political and social elite in the United Kingdom to be a completely safe and sound Canadian intermediary' (Pearson, 1972, p. 146).

The Making of a Diplomat: Lester B. Pearson at Canada House London, 1935 to 1941

And with Canada having control over its Foreign Affairs since 1931, King wanted more distant diplomats who would advance Canadian foreign policy interests, and not keep Canada in a subservient position on the international stage (Pearson, 1972, pp. 102-118). Pearson's focus on the wheat price was not directly addressed in his memoir, as he then shifted his focus to tensions that arose for Canadians working at Canada House from not knowing what the King government decided until they were informed from Whitehall (Pearson, 1972, pp. 146-148).

Another major and pressing war issue which Pearson helped to address was the desire to set up training bases on Canadian soil. Pearson described a meeting he attended with a British official in which the objective was to propose that the Canadian war production line could build American planes for the RAF and for the Canadian Air Force simultaneously, stating how the 'British chairman was not impressed' (Pearson, 1972, p. 147). Furthermore, Pearson observed that 'He did not think that they would ever reach the point where they would need American aircraft which, in any event, were not much good. There was an insularity about it all which was irritating and which was soon to be shaken by events' (Pearson, 1972, p. 147). Tough negotiations were occurring, and Anglo-Canadian relations were experiencing difficulties while the war continued, but this was also a time for Pearson to have his good temper, loyalty, patience and precision tested (Nicholson, 1963, pp. 104-122).

Pearson gave a series of talks to the British public during the war on the BBC radio, and at universities. On January 31st, 1941, he gave a lecture to students at the University College of Nottingham, and demonstrated his precision skills through relaying specific information about Canada and the United States:

This [American] penetration is so much easier in Canada because Canadian business, Canadian industry, and Canadian labour are organized in fundamentally the same way as that of the United States.

The result? At the end of 1934 there were more than 1350 companies in Canada controlled by or definitely affiliated with American firms. Almost a fourth of the manufacturing in Canada was done by United States controlled companies (Pearson, 1970, pp. 27-28).

He talked about the presentation's conclusion being interrupted by an air raid alert. After the first alert, no one left, which impressed Pearson. During a second interruption, Nazi aircraft were flying over the city and bombs were being dropped. He reported to have lost half of his audience. After a third interruption, he lost his entire audience just before he finished (Pearson, 1970, pp. 24-25). Biographer and Canadian historian Robert Bothwell commented on the significance of this time period for Pearson: 'By the time the final crisis arrived, in August 1939, he had decided that his instincts lay with the British who with all their faults still stood for decency and order, and against the 'savagery and barbarism' represented by the other side' (Pearson, 1970, pp. 24-25). Pearson did state in his memoir that 'Far less easy to understand and to accept was the kind of decision made by the British government to retaliate for the shackling of prisoners taken by the Nazis at Dieppe without any consultation with the government of Canada, though nearly all the prisoners were

Canadians' (Pearson, 1970, p. 171). Despite this articulated frustration, he developed the diplomatic skill of loyalty to the British people, partially from being very impressed by their calm in the face of such dangerous bombing, as well as developing a greater realisation regarding the importance of Anglo-Canadian unity in order to manage a major British crisis more effectively. Additionally, he developed more understanding of the notion of the Anglosphere as a community of five English speaking countries (Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States), which influenced war and peace, and built alliances and coalitions of international conflict and cooperation, with a focus on striving to spread freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and the English language (Vucetic, 2011, p. 3 and Wellings and Mycock, Ed., Aut., Vucetic, 2018, p. 78).

The Canadian push to recognise Canadian sovereignty

The paradoxical nature of Anglo-Canadian relations during the war was also made evident by decisions around the actions of members of the Canadian Armed Forces. On this issue, Pearson described how:

Military discussions and negotiations with the United Kingdom were greatly facilitated by the close personal relations established and maintained by Canadian Military Headquarters with the British Defence Services. This was the easier because of friendships formed between the senior officers of both countries, through service together in World War I or attendance at the Imperial Staff and Defence Colleges. It was not made easier, however, by the feeling sometimes encountered at the highest political and military levels that Canadian formations overseas were really an integral part of the British imperial forces and, as such, subject to the direction and control of London (Pearson, 1972, p. 149).

Pearson reported that diplomatic dialogue was essential and had 'educational value to many Whitehall officials who learned to appreciate the difference between a Canadian division in 1939 and a colonial contingent in 1914' (Pearson, 1972, p. 150). This difference was substantial on the grounds that when Canada entered the First World War in 1914, they were automatically involved when the United Kingdom declared war, as Canada had not yet attained control of Foreign Affairs. By 1939 Canada had full control of Foreign Affairs and was able to determine when and how it would deploy its military in an international conflict (Pearson, 1972, pp. 63-175). Pearson's diplomatic skill of precision was further developed by his repetition of statements that dealt with the idea of respect for Canadian independence. In April of 1940, there was talk of a plan to send British and Canadian soldiers to resist Nazi occupation in Norway, under the direction of a British military commander (Pearson, 1972, p. 169). Although the operation never went ahead for multiple reasons, including an attempt to mislead the Nazis (Pearson, 1972, p. 168), it exemplified a rift which needed to be worked out regarding Anglo-Canadian relations and the allocation of allied war communication and responsibilities. As Pearson stated, 'The Norwegian episode was, in a sense, a dress rehearsal for the future. Partly because of this experience, the problem of authority was clarified, if not completely resolved, before the war began in earnest' (Pearson, 1972, p. 170). He also observed in relation to this issue that 'if a government is to be politically acceptable to its people, it has to see that national interests are protected, even in wartime, and that an appropriate national control over its own fighting forces is

maintained' (Pearson, 1972, p. 170). This focus on independence would continue in other areas as the war progressed and gave Pearson an opportunity to further develop his diplomatic skill of precision in communication and negotiation through making specific demands and ensuring they would be respected and met.

Upon returning to Ottawa in February 1942, Pearson stated that Prime Minister King 'still seemed obsessed with ensuring that the British government would recognize our constitutional independence and our special internal problems' (Pearson, 1972, pp. 192-196). Pearson's emphasis on this point shows a major Canadian government theme in the post 1931 era; that conditional loyalty to the British while Whitehall simultaneously respected Canada's newly developed independence on foreign policy. After his short transition from London to Ottawa, Pearson's new assignment was in Washington, and he reiterated that:

We had to be careful here, however, as in London, to insist that we should be treated not as a subordinate to be ordered, but as an ally to be asked and consulted; an ally, moreover, that had been in the war from the beginning, as in World War I. If occasionally Washington acted as though Canada were another state of the union, we tried to be tolerant, realizing our American friends, unlike the British, had not been educated to respect our national sovereign status-and our sensitivity. They too would learn this, under our firm but friendly teaching, or so we hoped (Pearson, 1972, p. 199).

For Pearson, the push for respect for Canadian national interests and independence continued into the next chapter of his political career, but he first developed the ability to advocate for these things at Canada House before returning to Ottawa and then working in Washington. His time in London was a developmental stepping stone to the next phase of his career, and the building of his diplomatic skill set.

As the war progressed, the skill of precision in diplomatic conduct included making concrete agreements such as developing an Air Training Agreement between Whitehall and Ottawa. Pearson observed:

We were involved in London in various ways, however, especially in the early stages when Colonel Ralston was in London. I attended most of the discussions that took place during that visit. It was clear from the beginning that the main difficulties would be over finance and control (Pearson, 1972, p. 151).

When it came to working out the financing of air training programs, Pearson further stated that 'While Canada was willing to bear the major share of the financial burden, it was felt that the original British proposals were beyond our capacity and they were modified accordingly' (Pearson, 1972, p. 151). Anglo-Canadian cooperation was strengthened by working in detail through a plethora of issues as the war progressed; in the process, Pearson continued to develop his skills.

Pearson ends the eighth chapter of the first volume of his memoirs by describing how Canada's Prime Minister would not be attending a Prime Ministers' summit planned for the summer of 1941 (Pearson, 1972, p. 156). Additionally, and despite the internal frustrations that Canadian diplomats like Pearson had with the lack of direction and collaboration from King in Ottawa, Pearson noted three other points of interest from the message from King to the British government. These were that the lines of communication and collaboration were already working well and did not need any further reformation; King was too busy with Canadian government affairs to leave for a Prime Ministers conference; and the staff at Canada House were a great and outstanding crew who continued to maintain solid Anglo-Canadian relations (Pearson, 1972, p. 156).

As the war progressed, Pearson wrote in greater detail about the distinction between what was done at Canada House, and what was done by the Prime Minister of Canada. He stated that 'our work at Canada House was concentrated more on plans and preparations for the war than with problems arising out of its conduct' (Pearson, 1972, p. 157). In relation to King, Pearson noted how 'Questions of strategy and of policy were dealt with on a high political level, often from Prime Minister to Prime Minister, on those occasions when the Canadian government was taken into the confidence of the British' (Pearson, 1972, p. 157). Pearson described this as a source of frustration and characterised his time at Canada House by a lack of communication from King in Ottawa.

Conclusion

On May 15th, 1941, Lester Pearson gave a farewell address over dinner in London, England, as he left Canada House for his next diplomatic assignment. Besides expressing his loyalty and support to the British people, and remarking how inspired he had been by their resilience in the face of horrific bombings, Pearson conceded that 'Canada House has been for me a good and a busy place in which to work. I hope that when I go back I may be able to convince any Canadians, if such there be, who wonder whether we have enough to do over here' (Pearson, 1970, pp. 35-37). Pearson felt that his work at Canada House was important and rewarding. Perhaps that is why John English later wrote of Pearson:

Mike began a diary upon his arrival in London in 1936 and continued it, with some major interruptions for ten years. The diary for the London years is his finest, for Mike never tired of the city and in the late 1930s he knew that London provided the finest vantage point to watch the great events of the time (English, 1989, pp. 185).

During his time in London, Pearson developed multiple characteristics of a sound diplomat: good temper, precision, calm, loyalty, and patience. These skills, outlined as significant by Nicolson (1963, pp. 104-122), would continue to benefit him. The admiration was mutual, as later in his career, Pearson himself would note in his 1958 William L. Clayton lecture that Nicolson was an intellectual that wrote with great wit and insight on the issue of diplomacy (Pearson, 1959, p. 5).

This article has highlighted Pearson's professional development, with specific examples of how he became a better diplomat, and the context in which he was able to acquire and hone his skills. Pearson demonstrated this growth through his approach to developing good

The Making of a Diplomat: Lester B. Pearson at Canada House London, 1935 to 1941

relations with his British colleagues, falling in love with the city of London, and admiring the British demeanour with the outbreak of World War II. Additionally, Pearson's mind attention to detail showed an understanding of how to accomplish his work-related objectives. As a result, the diplomatic skill set he developed at this time would help him throughout his career, in particular resolving the Suez Crisis (Pearson, 1973, pp. 3-277).

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The Making of a Diplomat: Lester B. Pearson at Canada House London, 1935 to 1941

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