



**Aloysius Balawyder.** *In the Clutches of the Kremlin: Canadian-East European Relations, 1945-1962.* East European Monographs. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 192 pp. \$36.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-88033-444-0.



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## Canada and the Cold War in Eastern Europe

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There is, in the study of Canadian foreign policy, a long-standing debate about the degree of Canada's involvement in the Cold War. One popular theory of the 1960s and 1970s suggests that Canada's intimate relations with other Western countries compelled its reluctant participation in a conflict that resulted only in Canada becoming more politically and economically dependent upon the United States.[1] A more recent theory argues that Canadian governments were enthusiastic partners in the Western anticommunist coalition and that Canadians embraced anti-Communism domestically and internationally.[2] The most widely-held perspective, however, acknowledges Canada's interest in containing communism but stresses Canada's liberal internationalism and its efforts to minimise the worst excesses of both the East and the West. Thus Canada is often depicted as having been more conciliatory towards the Communist bloc than the United States and great pride is taken in Canada's international reputation as a "helpful fixer" despite former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's disdain for this label.[3]

A book examining Canada's relations with Eastern European countries during the early Cold War should contribute a great deal to this debate by revealing the domestic and international factors that shaped Canadian foreign policy after the Second World War. More generally, such a book could also contribute to a broader understanding of the Cold War by determining, for example, how far membership in NATO and the Warsaw Pact constrained bilateral relations between the smaller members of both alliances.

Aloysius Balawyder has written several books on Canada's relations with Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union and has been recognised by the government of Poland for his contribution to the study of Canada and Poland. Unfortunately, his latest treatment of Canadian-East European relations from 1945 to 1962 does not fully realise the potential of its topic. In nine short chapters, Balawyder touches upon such subjects as the evolution of diplomatic relations between Canada and countries such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia; immigration to Canada from the Eastern Europe; Canadian commercial interests in the region; and

Canada's reaction to religious persecution by Eastern European governments.

There is much useful information here. For example, Balawyder discusses the imbroglio over the Polish art treasures deposited in Canada during the Second World War, detailing the negative effect this issue had upon relations between the Communist government in Poland, that wanted to recover the treasures after the war, and the government of Canada, which had trouble prevailing upon the anti-Communist provincial authorities in Quebec to give them back. Balawyder similarly examines the reaction in Canada to the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and Canada's acceptance of over 37,000 refugees who fled Hungary following the suppression of the revolt by the Soviets. These episodes, however, are already familiar to students of Canadian history. More novel is Balawyder's treatment of immigration to Canada from Eastern Europe, Canada's commercial relations with the region, and in particular the use of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation-International Service as a propaganda tool against Communist governments. Like *Voice of America* and the international service of the BBC, the CBC-IS was part of a broad campaign by Western governments to advance Western interests in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Balawyder argues that the Canadian government also used radio broadcasts to disseminate a distinctly Canadian viewpoint and to promote Canadian cultural, political, and economic interests in Eastern Europe.

The purpose of *In the Clutches of the Kremlin* is obvious. Balawyder contends that the Cold War provided the framework for Canada's relations with Eastern European countries from 1945 to 1962 and clearly this is so. It is equally clear that the Canadian government also pursued its own interests, particularly with regard to economic penetration of Eastern European markets and encouraging immigration to Canada from the region.

Nevertheless, Canada's bilateral interests in Eastern

Europe remained limited throughout the period. Given this situation, the importance of Canada's relations with Eastern European countries only becomes readily apparent if they are contextualised within those of the Western coalition as a whole. Balawyder's failure to compare these relations to those of Canada's allies more fully undermines the usefulness of this book to scholars of the Cold War. While the book is of some interest to specialists in Canadian foreign policy, its value is compromised by a disappointing bibliography which neglects many significant works on Canada and the Cold War, including many produced in the 1990s, and by woefully inadequate editing. More seriously, the book is written solely from the Canadian perspective. This approach would have made sense in the mid-1980s when it appears that much of the research was completed, but it is inadequate for a book published in 2000 by which time sources in Eastern Europe were much more accessible to Western scholars.

Nevertheless, Balawyder's book provides a useful service by introducing a subject that future scholars may use to expand our understanding of East-West relations after the Second World War.

#### Notes

[1]. See R.D. Cuff and J.L. Granatstein, *Ties that Bind: Canadian-American Relations in Wartime from the Great War to the Cold War* (Toronto: Hakkert, 1975).

[2]. See Reg Whitaker and Gary Marcuse, *Cold War Canada: The Making of a National Insecurity State, 1945-1957* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); or Joseph Jockel, *No Boundaries Upstairs: Canada, the United States and the origins of North American air defence, 1945-1958* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987).

[3]. See Norman Hillmer and J.L. Granatstein, *Empire to Umpire: Canada and the World to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp, Clark and Longman, 1994).

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