

A SAMARITAN STATE REVISITED: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON CANADIAN FOREIGN AID

Edited by Greg Donaghy and David Webster

ISBN 978-1-77385-041-2

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy <http://www.re-press.org>

Developing the World in Canada's Image: Hugh Keenleyside and Technical Assistance

David Webster

Canada entered the world of international development aid not with a bang but with a whine.

The occasion was a cabinet meeting in November 1950 to grant what the Department of External Affairs thought was a routine matter: approval of the first report of the Colombo Plan, a Commonwealth scheme to aid economic development in South and Southeast Asia. Lester Pearson, the external affairs minister, was in New York for UN meetings. Robert Mayhew, minister of fisheries and previously Canadian delegate to Commonwealth conferences where the Colombo Plan was hashed out, was also absent. So was Brooke Claxton, the minister of defence and a prominent booster of the idea of Canadian aid to Asia. Cabinet did not wave through the report. Instead, “the attitude was icy,” reported Wynne Plumptre, head of the Economic Division of External Affairs. “The red herrings hatched in the Department of Finance reared their heads. Further, and most disappointing, the Prime Minister [Louis St. Laurent] himself gave no support—rather the reverse.”¹

Finance minister Douglas Abbott carried the day with his argument that aid to Asia was doomed to fail. He implied that there were two

problems, population growth and military spending by Asian governments, that would more than consume the limited amounts of aid that Canada could provide. Cabinet declined to approve Canadian participation that day, though it did not object to other Commonwealth governments going ahead.² Only in early 1951 did Canada finally and reluctantly sign on to the Colombo Plan, which became the face of Canadian development aid, embraced by leaders of all three major political parties and a vast array of groups outside government. Its centrality in Canada-India relations is described in Jill Campbell-Miller's chapter in this volume.

Canada's embrace of the early idea of development aid was not pioneering, idealistic, and enthusiastic. Rather, it was contentious, hesitant, and grounded in the cold war clash between the communist Soviet Union and the American-led Western alliance.³ Ministers were not sold on the idea of aid, and many thought that development work was the proper domain of the United Nations. Indeed, UN aid provided Canada with a global development mission and helped shape the multilateral character of Canadian development assistance. In particular, St. Laurent and his ministers wondered if it would be wiser to channel all aid through the United Nations. Thus, before cabinet approved the Colombo Plan, the order was given to consult "UN officials concerned with technical assistance" before committing to an aid scheme involving only the Asian Commonwealth.⁴ This was mainly a sign of preference for efficiency and for working through the UN, but it was also a demand from St. Laurent to consult a former Canadian civil service mandarin who was serving as director-general of the United Nations Technical Assistance Administration (TAA): Hugh Keenleyside.

Technical assistance was a scheme for wealthier and more technically advanced countries to send experts to less developed countries, where they would share their knowledge and skills—their "know-how" and "show-how," in the American terminology.⁵ It also offered fellowships for people from the Global South to study in the industrialized North, and funded equipment needed to implement technical advice. It is normally traced back to US president Harry S. Truman's 1949 inaugural address. "Point Four" of Truman's foreign policy agenda was to launch "a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." While

material resources were finite, Truman said, “our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible.”⁶

But technical assistance was not only Truman’s Point Four; it was also Point Six of UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie’s program for achieving peace through the United Nations.⁷ The origins of technical assistance were not just American: they were multilateral, rooted in the United Nations, and heavily shaped by middle-ranking powers, like Canada.

Keenleyside’s years at the TAA serve as the thread weaving together Canadian involvement in technical assistance—the only channel outside the Colombo Plan in which Canada assisted in economic development during the 1950s. They show multilateral technical assistance emerging as a vital aspect of Canada’s overseas development policy. The amounts were less than those that would flow to capital assistance for infrastructure (especially in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) through the Colombo Plan. Politically, however, UN technical assistance loomed large on Canadian policy makers’ aid horizons. Keenleyside’s leadership of the TAA heightened existing Canadian preference for multilateral channels, while positioning Canada as a leading proponent of the UN’s technical assistance system.

Hugh Keenleyside and the Origins of Technical Assistance

Born in 1898 in Toronto, Keenleyside grew up in Vancouver, the child of devout Christian parents: he attended four church services each Sunday as a child. After completing a PhD in history at the University of British Columbia in 1923, he began teaching history in the United States, sometimes drawing on his research expertise to comment on US domestic politics. Keenleyside impressed American progressive politicians with speeches that used the case of publicly owned railways in Canada as proof that public ownership did not inevitably lead to economic disaster. Along with Lester Pearson, he was one of two men to win appointment in the first competitive examination for the Department of External Affairs in 1928. He soon took charge of opening Canada’s first embassy in Japan. The posting earned him a reputation for “meticulous reporting of Far Eastern affairs” from Canada’s only diplomatic outpost outside Europe and North America.⁸ It also solidified his left-leaning politics. Touring Canada during the

Great Depression, Keenleyside wrote that he “came to the view that while there were more violent crimes [.] there was none so shameful as poverty.”⁹

Keenleyside returned to Ottawa in 1936, eventually rising to the rank of assistant undersecretary in 1941, and established himself as a pro-Asian voice in Ottawa. Soon after his return, he was calling for a liberal stance on migration from China and Japan, in contrast to the predominant view, in British Columbia especially, that migration from Asia should be banned.¹⁰ He was a progressive outlier in the Ottawa civil service, especially after he opposed deportations of Japanese-Canadians from the west coast during the Second World War. This was probably the reason for what Prime Minister Mackenzie King described as “considerable prejudice against him on the part of some Members of Parliament.”¹¹ Perhaps in a bid to remove him from Ottawa, he was made ambassador to Mexico from 1944 to 1947, winning plaudits for his focus on “mutual-interest business matters” rather than the cocktail circuit.¹²

On his return from Mexico, Keenleyside became deputy minister of mines and resources, where he implemented numerous reforms and reorganized the government department that dealt with one of Ottawa’s longest list of responsibilities: northern regional development, forestry, national parks, immigration policy, Indigenous people, and running the Northwest Territories. As commissioner of the Northwest Territories, he led what historian Shelagh Grant described as a “distinct departure from the former *laissez-faire* approach to economic development” in the North. Education spending soared by 575 per cent during his tenure, for instance, thirteen times the national average.¹³ His activist approach to the North, Canada’s less-developed periphery, was reformist and interventionist in administration, modernizing in economic development policy, and paternalistic toward Indigenous peoples. He was a leading figure in pushing through a modernizing, technocratic approach to the Northwest Territories that would be echoed soon afterward by the CCF government of Saskatchewan.¹⁴ He would carry the same leadership style into his UN work.

Again he stood on the fringes in an increasingly anti-communist Ottawa: as deputy minister, he was no keener to take action against the communist-controlled International Seamen’s Union than he had been on uprooting Japanese-Canadians. The powerful “minister of everything” C. D. Howe even called him a communist at one cabinet meeting.¹⁵ The



FIGURE 3.1
Hugh Keenleyside,
October 1954. (Source:
UN Photo 337064)

chance to take on UN work in warmer climates with fewer checks on his freedom of action was probably welcome. In 1950, Keenleyside agreed to head a UN technical assistance mission to Bolivia, after obtaining the consent of his minister and Prime Minister St. Laurent for three months' leave to take part in what Resources and Development Minister Robert Winters called a "pioneering" mission.¹⁶

The technical assistance mission to Bolivia studied the pattern of the landlocked South American country's economy and asked why its natural resources had not led to much prosperity for its people. Its staff of twenty-two included five Americans and experts from Canada, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Switzerland, who deployed to Bolivia for a four-month survey. This was very much a group of experts offering universal lessons to a specific locale about which they knew little. Offered

the post, Keenleyside began by getting an atlas and starting to learn about “a country of whose history I had only an indifferent knowledge and of whose current social and economic circumstances I knew even less.” The mission’s model was to be a team of multinational experts, each with their own specialty but living together in one hotel with a common dining room table and a common lounge used for weekly check-in sessions.¹⁷

Oddly, the UN’s technical assistance mission to Bolivia operated with limited awareness of the country’s development history and highly stratified society, where a small elite dominated and Indigenous people were marginalized. Bolivian governments stressed nationalism and economic development. Tin exports buoyed an export-oriented economy, spurring strong mining unions and left-wing political movements. The UN responded to Bolivian requests for technical aid by sending two officials in 1949 for conversations in La Paz. They arrived just as a revolution broke out (the government survived, but would be toppled in 1952). When the opposition National Revolutionary Movement (MNR) finished second in subsequent national elections, the president resigned in favour of Vice-President Mamerto Urriolagoitia, described by American diplomats as a “resolute” and “honest” figure “around which a stronger future Bolivian state can be built.”¹⁸

The 1949 uprising meant that “the conditions for rendering technical assistance did not seem very propitious,” one UN memorandum recorded drily.¹⁹ Still, the revolution leant “particular urgency” to the need for experts “whose judgments will command respect because of their own competence and because of the moral prestige of the United Nations.”²⁰ Bolivian demands and UN wishes dovetailed in some aspects, but each had its own goals. The UN’s technical assistance stressed economic modernization, the application of expertise, continued alignment with US intentions for South America, and political stability. It was far from the demands expressed by popular movements that were on the rise in Bolivia.

The Keenleyside mission that followed these early UN steps into Bolivia would set the stamp on the UN’s overall pattern of technical assistance and lead to Keenleyside becoming the director-general of the TAA immediately afterward. In a remarkable report that largely ignored the social changes taking place in Bolivia, it recommended that the country accept foreign advisors and appoint them to decision-making roles in the Bolivian civil



FIGURE 3.2

Hugh Keenleyside signs a technical assistance agreement with Colombia, while UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie (right) looks on. (Source: UN Photo 335071)

service. Without such a “bold and dramatic step,” the report went, Bolivia would face centuries more underdevelopment. But foreign experts, the mission concluded, would make it “possible to telescope into a single generation or less the economic and social advance that will otherwise involve a slow progression over many decades.”²¹ Obviously, there would be fears of foreign control if foreign advisors were to staff Bolivian government offices. To defuse that, Keenleyside pointed to the multilateral character of the advisors: “The fact that they would come from a number of countries and would serve in a sense under U.N. auspices would, we believed, counteract charges that the programme was just a continuance of the old colonial system.”²² Multilateralism was made into virtue. Images of Bolivian poverty, meanwhile, served to underpin the campaign for change.

The notion of “telescoping” development indicated one of the main appeals of technical assistance: the hope that it could deliver fast results. The other major selling point was that technical assistance was cheap: officials from both Indonesia and the United States, for example, said it could

the mission, pitching it at a dinner party hosted by Bolivia's third largest mining magnate soon after his arrival in La Paz, before he had even left the capital city, and while the streets outside were under martial law imposed over fears of a left-wing revolution. His leadership style forced an issue of foreign tutelage over a less developed country in a way that others at the UN shied away from. Keenleyside hammered his staff until they all agreed to recommend a plan that employed these powerful foreign experts, under the innocuous term "administrative assistants." He knew the idea would be a tough sell. "But," he wrote, "I'm not going to be satisfied with—though I may have to accept—anything less fundamental. I'm not going to waste four months on a report that could have been written in Lake Success—and that would produce no really useful results."

In a meeting with two right-wing party leaders whom he considered "idiotic," Keenleyside noted that "both swallowed the foreign control idea without gagging." So too did president Urriolagoitia. With the Bolivian government onside, Keenleyside flew to New York and Geneva to win the support of the UN. "Some of the people at the top are frightened of my suggestions although those at the operating levels are all enthusiastic in their support," he wrote. But he would not be dissuaded, lobbying hard and delivering an ultimatum that his recommendation for "effective administrators" would not change in the final report, come what may.²⁵ Keenleyside won the fight at the UN and returned to Bolivia to finish the mission's report.

The final document reflected his preferences. It charted a clear course for Bolivia based on technical expertise to keep the country on its existing trajectory and reliance on mineral exports, ignoring opposition demands for a more people-centred agrarian development path. Though this is nowhere noted in UN accounts, the opposition MNR and the trade unions stridently opposed UN plans. The UN and the Urriolagoitia government had "imposed ignominiously upon us a foreign mission which came to govern us with extraordinary powers to place the Bolivian economy at the entire disposition of imperialist military plans," one labour-oriented newspaper wrote.²⁶

The MNR won the 1952 election, prompting a military coup, then an MNR-led protest movement that finally brought the party to power. Although it briefly froze the admission of new advisors and nationalized tin mines, a step that Keenleyside's mission had called "wholly impractical

under present conditions,” the MNR government soon saw value in the UN presence. The UN was able to negotiate an agreement to provide “technical consultants” to the new regime. UN planning and publicity continued unchanged, in keeping with claims that technical assistance was apolitical. A UN paper two years later stressed “continuity in the composition of the mission,” with UN advisors acting as “a stable and trusted element in the agencies where they served. . . . It does not seem exaggerated to ascribe the consistency and relative moderation of the Government policies, in part at last, to the stabilizing influence of the Mission.”²⁷

UN advice guided the revolutionary government toward becoming a modernizing technocratic administration. As UN Technical Assistance Resident Representative Margaret Anstee recalled, the MNR had few options if it wanted outside help, since the World Bank and Washington opposed it completely. Thus the MNR proved willing to welcome “senior people who would not just be advisors but who would have line functions in very high positions in key ministries.”²⁸ At all levels, UN officials interpenetrated the Bolivian government—“part of the national team, not as outsiders at all,” in Anstee’s words.²⁹

Bolivia became one of the UN’s largest technical assistance fields of operation. By 1956, it was by far the largest TAA project in Latin America, receiving more than double the funds spent on second-place Colombia. The UN’s ability to ease a revolutionary government into modernizing paths was, to Keenleyside and other UN officials, a sign of technical assistance’s utility.

Keenleyside’s Bolivia experience, meanwhile, won him the post of first director-general of the new Technical Assistance Administration. Prime Minister St. Laurent agreed that Canada had a “great” interest in technical assistance, and a Canadian ended up with a senior UN job in a field in which Canada would become highly active.³⁰

Press reports in Canada cheered Keenleyside’s appointment. The *Montreal Star* hailed him as a “brutally frank . . . no-nonsense executive” well equipped to tackle “the largest peacetime operation the United Nations has attempted.”³¹ His “reputation for energy” would be important to the great new work of international technical aid, wrote the *Winnipeg Free Press*.³² In his regular broadcast from the UN, CBC radio reporter Peter Stursberg raved about the opportunities opening up: “It’s a great story—this technical

aid—a story that cannot be told too often—particularly at this time when there seems to be nothing happening here except the squabbles in the Security Council.”³³ It also provided a modest boost to Canada’s self-image at a time when the UN was central enough in Canadian foreign policy that UN staff appointments made headlines. Technical assistance offered a gleam of hope at a time when things looked bleak at the UN.

As the Cold War took hold and the UN was unable to do much on peace and security, technical assistance provided it with a mission and a new lease on life. As director-general of the TAA, Keenleyside preferred a low profile to the front lines. Only a refusal to shake hands with former Nazi economist and then advisor to the Indonesian government, Hjalmar Schacht, on a visit to Indonesia put his name on the front pages. Keenleyside’s leadership style was operational and managerial, seeking to enhance TAA status and budgets within the UN system and to position the UN as the major actor in international aid. In this, he reflected the preferences and style of other UN officials. The TAA was, in Keenleyside’s words, a “busy shop” doing a great deal more operational work than most of the UN Secretariat.³⁴ It had a clear vision: to help less developed countries create and implement national development plans. These plans would be inspired not by American liberalism but by European and Commonwealth social democratic thought.

Keenleyside’s politics, which he described as Labour Cooperative in the British mould, fit well within this TAA social-democratic milieu. Keenleyside had worked for Prime Minister Mackenzie King, but he did not believe that King was the best man for the job. He preferred M. J. Coldwell, leader of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), forerunner to today’s New Democratic Party.³⁵ To help run the TAA, Keenleyside brought in George Cadbury, the head of the Economic Advisory Planning Board in Tommy Douglas’s CCF government of Saskatchewan, to be his director of operations. He named Frank Scott, the McGill law professor, poet, and former national president of the CCF, as UN technical assistance chief in Burma. In 1958, he even hired retired CCF leader Coldwell to head up a community evaluation mission to India, and he was later instrumental in arranging a UNDP resident representative post for Woodrow Lloyd, the outgoing CCF premier of Saskatchewan.³⁶

Canada and UN Technical Assistance

Canada was never, of course, governed by the CCF. But Liberal and Progressive Conservative governments of the 1950s certainly embraced the UN's technical assistance work.³⁷ Canada always gave more money to UN technical assistance than it did through the Colombo Plan's technical assistance scheme. The efficiency and centralized nature of the TAA appealed to those in Ottawa who liked things tidy. Canada initially lacked the cash and the interest to follow the United States, France, and others into creating a large bilateral aid program. More impact might come within multilateral channels such as UN technical assistance. UN figures, too, preferred to have funds flow through their coffers, not bilaterally. Keenleyside and others at the UN thought that the TAA's processes ran much more smoothly than the clunky and inefficient aid administration run by Nik Cavell in Ottawa, the subject of Greg Donaghy's chapter. TAA officials regretted that Canada maintained its own technical assistance bureaucracy rather than simply writing a cheque to the UN. Still, Canada's support for the TAA bolstered multilateral technical assistance even as the United States preferred to put most of its technical assistance cash into its own large bilateral program.

The TAA was always short of funds and periodically under attack in the US Congress, often suspicious of foreign aid and of the United Nations more generally. It looked to Canada for both cash and a vote of confidence in UN technical assistance. Thus Keenleyside undertook a Canada-wide speaking tour in 1953 to build public support for the UN and international development.³⁸ This is the sort of initiative that boosted public awareness and public support for overseas aid. Keenleyside would continue this effort to shape public opinion in several more trips north in subsequent years. He warned an audience at McGill University in 1955, for instance, that "no peace can be deemed secure so long as over half the population of the world is ignorant, diseased, hungry and oppressed."³⁹ Calls from churches, trade unions, and non-governmental organizations for Canada to increase its aid abounded in the 1950s.

This created a public constituency for aid and a public commitment to the idea of aid, a theme discussed in Ted Cogan's chapter in this volume. "We have been conscious that Canadians, as individuals—and this has been clearly reflected in the press from one end of the country to the

FIGURE 3.4
 Technical Assistance Pledges, 1956.

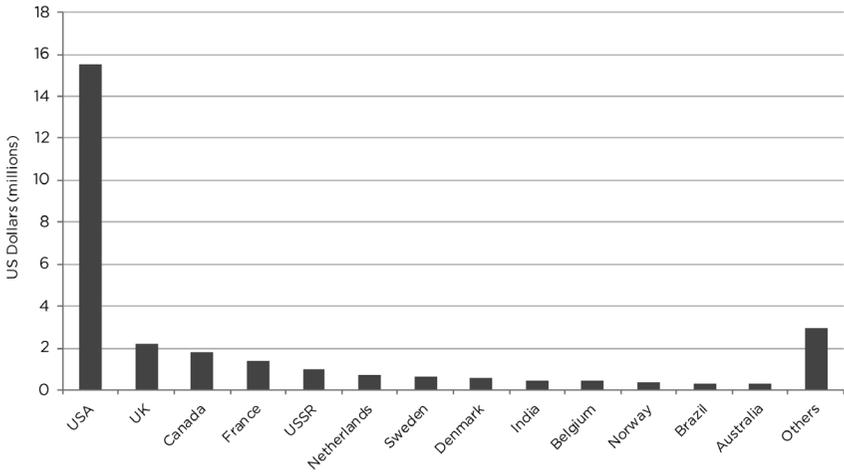
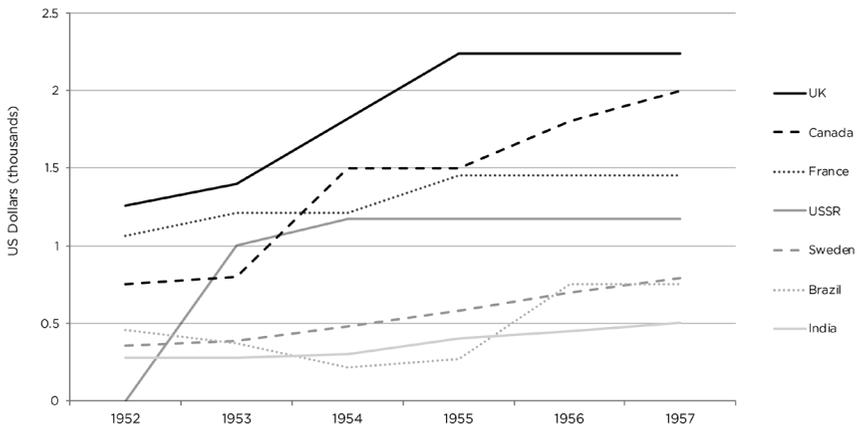


FIGURE 3.5
 Annual Pledges, 1952–57.



other—wish to contribute to the success of this plan,” Pearson said after a parliamentary foreign affairs debate.⁴⁰ An increasing volume of letters from the public reached Ottawa in support of foreign aid and calling for more funds. Correspondents ranged from the Ministerial Association in Almonte, Ontario, to the Canadian Congress of Labour (which wanted aid quadrupled).⁴¹ The chief Colombo Plan administrator in Canada reported that he was “deluged” with requests for information.⁴² Australian advocates of increased aid looked jealously to Canada’s higher public support for aid.⁴³ Keenleyside noted growing support in Canada for aid in general too. He thought “our people are ahead of the Government in this matter.”⁴⁴ Keenleyside did not of course shift Canadian public opinion on his own, but the presence and advocacy of one of the best-informed Canadians active in the aid field probably contributed to an atmosphere of growing public support for overseas development aid.

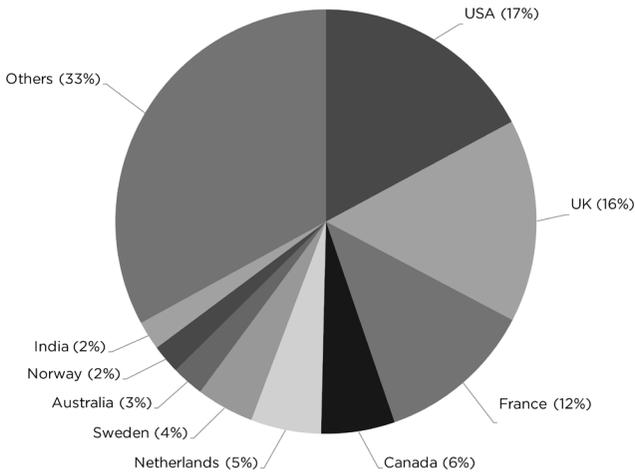
Keenleyside moved smoothly from public speeches to private lobbying. He appealed to Pearson to come to New York and deliver a speech that “like the shot fired at Lexington, would be heard round the world.”⁴⁵ Six weeks later, Keenleyside followed up with a plea for more money, saying Congress might cut US funding, and that more money from Canada, Britain, Australia, France, and the Netherlands was vital. Canada, he wrote, was the most important of those countries because it could influence US views. After all: “Americans looked upon Canadians as being hard-headed, sensible and practical people.” Meanwhile, Canada could afford, he thought, “a somewhat spectacular gesture.”⁴⁶ Not too spectacular, but somewhat spectacular.

Keenleyside’s lobbying paid off. In 1956, Canada overtook France to become the third-largest contributor to UN technical assistance, after the US and the UK, taking first place among contributors in per capita terms.⁴⁷

Canada also ranked high among the countries sending out technical advisors. A comprehensive list of UN experts from 1954 gives a snapshot. The TAA at that point had roughly 400 experts in the field. Seventy of them held US citizenship. Britain followed closely with 63—at least a couple of these actually being residents of Canada—and France stood third. Canada, the Netherlands, and Sweden led a large number of other countries.⁴⁸

In all this, it is evident that Canada was playing a different role from the bigger powers, in common with some other “like-minded countries”

FIGURE 3.6
UN TAA Experts by Nationality, 1954.



in northern Europe. This alignment was clear by the 1970s,⁴⁹ but it can be traced to the 1950s. Technical assistance paved the way.

Development Diplomacy

While technical assistance aimed to promote economic development as its primary goal, it also had diplomatic objectives. The UN secretariat called technical assistance “a new form of diplomacy.”⁵⁰ Canadian officials felt just the same: a technical expert “is in fact an ambassador of our country,” to quote the standard recruitment letter from the Technical Cooperation Service in the Department of Trade And Commerce.⁵¹ It all evoked the missionary days, when so many Canadians crossed an ocean to change other societies. Keenleyside’s standard letter of welcome to experts billed technical assistance as a “great crusade for human progress” guided by “high purposes.” Technical assistance, he wrote, was “based upon the assumption that it is possible and practical to transfer knowledge and techniques from

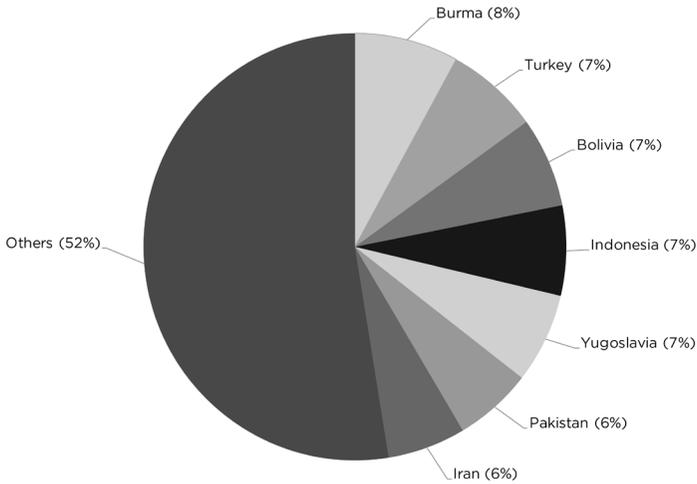
one area to another for the purpose of advancing the economic and social development of the people of the world.”⁵² The religious language was not accidental. Writing much later, Keenleyside felt that the best advisors were “infused with some measure of the true missionary spirit.”⁵³ Development work was the new missionary work, and technical advisors were guided by similar fervour to improve other societies.⁵⁴ Technical advisors, like missionaries, travelled with helpful intent. Yet, like missionaries, they often ended up as “beneficent imperialists,” spreading a model of cultural change based on their own national experiences and overly reliant on a simplistic ideology of technological transfer.⁵⁵

The thousands of technical advisors who travelled on multiple looping journeys to advise the governments of less developed countries were not simply itinerant experts who flew in, advised, and then departed. They were also diplomats. In the case of Canada and many other countries, they could be a more important channel for contacts and connections than the government’s own official diplomats. In this, they took over a niche once occupied by Christian missionaries, whose own work was undergoing “NGO-ization”—a process examined by Ruth Compton Brouwer.⁵⁶ They were in effect acting as diplomats carrying out a form of what Mary Young and Susan Henders describe as Canadian “other diplomacy.”⁵⁷

Technical assistance diplomacy was one of the ties that bound less developed countries to the industrialized West. When the governments of newly independent states in non-communist Asia began to seek economic development and to replace their colonial economies with “national economies” in the 1950s, they almost all opted for the tool of “development planning.” That meant taking back control of the national economy from former colonial rulers, but it also meant continued international links. First, the more developed countries of the North provided possible models, potential “paths to modernity.” Second, they could offer the technical experts and the technical expertise that new states felt they needed. Third, development required capital, and many countries sought that through raw material exports, meaning they had to remain integrated into the global economy.

UN technical assistance favoured middle-sized countries seen as having good potential for the sort of economic development the UN was looking for—which, again, tended to be social-democratic. The 1954 snapshot

FIGURE 3.7
UN TAA Experts by Country Placements, 1954.



in Figure 3.7 provides a typical picture of where technical advisors operated. Of the experts in the field, the largest group was in Burma, followed by Turkey, Bolivia, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Iran, and Pakistan. The group included United States allies, but it was hardly a list of US priority countries. Instead, it favoured middle-sized non-aligned governments.

These technical advisors sought to build what might be called a “development world order.”⁵⁸ The UN was seeking to build the world anew, and development gave it an ideal mission statement. The UN’s major contribution to modernization theory was the idea of democratic planning, pioneered by postwar social-democratic governments in Britain, France, Saskatchewan, and elsewhere. Development planning, in Arturo Escobar’s description, “involved the overcoming or eradication of ‘traditions,’ ‘obstacles,’ and ‘irrationalities’; that is, the wholesale modification of existing human and social structures and their replacement with rational new ones.”⁵⁹ The UN, without the apparent axe to grind of the United States, was a more welcomed and thus more effective channel to transmit the idea



FIGURE 3.8

An unidentified Egyptian worker operating a large radial drill at a machine shop in Port Fuad as part of a UN technical assistance project supporting the rehabilitation of the Suez Canal. (Source: UN Photo 146207)

of planning. Its model was not American liberalism; still less was it Soviet central planning. Through the TAA, it was helping to reconstitute a capitalist and Eurocentric world order, while at the same time trying to construct an interconnected “world in development” in which technical assistance would “change lives” and change the way the world was organized.⁶⁰ TAA officials could use the phrase “stages of development” well before it was popularized by American modernization theory’s guru, Walt Rostow.⁶¹

The TAA acted from a position of power, as bearers of superior technical knowledge, but also from a position of relative weakness compared to wealthier US technical advisory services offering a different type of model. It did so in partnership with an emerging group of planners in less developed countries. Technical assistance also allowed the UN to build a world-girdling diplomatic service of its own. The array of Technical Assistance resident representatives established under UN auspices around the world formed a network that few governments could rival. By 1958, when the TAA folded into other UN departments, some 8,000 technical advisors had gone overseas and there were 39 Technical Assistance resident offices functioning as, in effect, UN development embassies to countries or regions. As a comparison, Canada by 1960 still had only four embassies in all of Africa.⁶²

An example of development diplomacy is Keenleyside's successful effort to bring the Soviet Union into the UN technical assistance scheme. Moscow initially rejected technical assistance as a tool of American imperialism. But soon after dictator Josef Stalin's death in March 1953, it launched an economic offensive to penetrate less developed countries, especially non-aligned countries in Asia. As part of this effort, Moscow offered to contribute 4 million roubles, the equivalent of a million American dollars. In presenting this about-face, Soviet delegate Amasasp Aroutunian distinguished US "Point Four" aid sharply from the UN's technical assistance. The Soviet Union, he said, "had always held that technical assistance should be made available through the intermediary of the United Nations. By contrast, the United States 'Point Four' plan was entirely contrary to United Nations principles, and constituted a weapon of penetration and coercion."⁶³

The Soviet offer came with strings. Most notably, the currency was to be entirely unconvertible. The TAA worked to find ways to draw the Soviet Union and its allies into the funding picture, despite an effort by Canada, Norway, and the United States to reject unconvertible Soviet and Czech contributions. For these Western powers, the danger was that the Soviets would use the UN channel to create bilateral links, with Soviet funds used to pay Soviet experts and provide Soviet equipment in Asian countries, and thereby create Soviet economic bridgeheads. This had to be resisted, but calls for all contributions to be fully convertible into other currencies

founded on the fact that British and French contributions, along with those of quite a few smaller donors, were not fully convertible either.

A further challenge came from Moscow's demand that Soviet contributions could go to the UN—meaning via the TAA—but not to any of its specialized agencies such as the World Health Organization or the Food and Agriculture Organization. The deal creating the UN Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance divvied up the funding pie between the TAA and specialized agencies. The Soviet offer threatened this carefully negotiated division of funds, for if one donor could alter the division of funds, then the entire package fell apart.

Consequently, the 1953 Soviet offer had to be rejected. At the same time, the TAA was desperately short of funds and relied for roughly half its income on the US grant, at constant risk of being cut or killed entirely by Congress. Keenleyside pushed Canada to raise its annual contribution as a means of pressuring other countries to do the same. But a large Soviet grant might provide a lifeline. With the Korean War ending in an armistice in 1953, a Soviet pledge to UN aid programs might also help encourage superpower cooperation, making a useful contribution to the UN mission of promoting global peace.

The UN and the TAA in particular looked for solutions. Keenleyside flew to Moscow to work out a deal after Soviet delegations to UN meetings proved unwilling to budge on their conditions. A series of “lurid” Soviet attacks on the UN's technical assistance contained some valid points, Keenleyside admitted. But he told his hosts that unless they removed their conditions, the UN could not accept their money. Keenleyside did not enjoy Moscow, complaining of its unattractive people bundled up against the cold and its “police state” atmosphere. However, he was impressed with Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Vasili Kuznetsov, who had once worked in a Detroit Ford Motors plant, and even with the “brilliant” Aroutunian, his chief tormentor in UN forums. In the end, Keenleyside got his way on the two key barriers by making concessions in other areas. The Soviet Union would allow the specialized agencies to use its funds, and consider partial convertibility if there was no way to use the full rouble amount on Soviet equipment and services. In exchange, the TAA and the agencies would look seriously at using more Soviet experts and try to spend more in the Soviet Union, including by allowing the WHO to buy Soviet medicines. “Our

success was subsequently of real help to the Expanded Programme and all those participating in it,” Keenleyside recalled. “It also added to T.A.A.’s popularity with the Specialized Agencies which had been both distressed and angered by the Russians’ preference for us.”⁶⁴

In short, the Keenleyside mission was a triumph, reflecting both Keenleyside’s individual leadership and the UN’s broader desire to bridge cold war divides. Secretary-General Trygve Lie was soon suggesting to Pearson that if all aid funds flowed through the UN, aid would not become a cold war battlefield.⁶⁵ A Canadian working in the secretariat, Lloyd Herman, was seconded to TAA for a months-long study of how to use Soviet aid. Meanwhile, the US Congress embarked on another bout of considering cuts to the UN technical assistance grant. If a cut was the result, “we might expect that the Soviet offer of aid would come to play a significant part in the programme as a whole,” Canada’s UN mission reported.⁶⁶

Moscow’s entry into the world of technical assistance appeared as a threat in Washington, used to a dominant voice in much of Asia. To a lesser extent this was also true in London, which saw the Colombo Plan as an instrument to maintain its influence in South and Southeast Asia. But the technical assistance diplomats of the UN were playing a different game, using technical assistance as a way to reduce cold war tensions. To an extent, they had the backing of some smaller powers, including Canada, for a gentler approach to the Soviet Union. Hugh Keenleyside’s 1954 Moscow trip was followed by a visit to the Soviet Union by Pearson in late 1955, the first by a NATO foreign minister after Stalin’s death. Canada’s role in technical assistance was significant, and Canada also had some sympathy for UN technical assistance diplomacy, led as it was by a former Canadian diplomat, Hugh Keenleyside.

Keenleyside formally retired from the UN in 1959 to become chairman of the British Columbia Power Commission, a recently nationalized public electricity utility. He continued as co-chairman of an enlarged British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority until 1969. In 1966, he published a well-received book on international aid.⁶⁷ Keenleyside rounded out his international experience as associate commissioner-general for the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat) held in Vancouver in 1976.

Conclusion: Developing the World

Canada was slower off the mark than some to send aid to the Global South, but it soon came to be a major donor, especially important to the UN's technical assistance programs. Ottawa embraced multilateral channels for aid and became a leading supporter and advocate of the UN's aid work. It was not a solo "Samaritan state." Instead, it stressed what might be dubbed collective Samaritanism, working closely with others to deliver aid in ways that were seen as mutually beneficial to both donor and recipient. This theme of mutual benefit reached its pinnacle in 1969 with the release of *Partners in Development*, the report of the UN-sponsored Commission on International Development, chaired by Lester Pearson following his retirement as prime minister.⁶⁸ Canadian and UN thinking on development dovetailed in that report, the culmination of more than a decade of experience.

Multilateralism meant that Canada did not establish its own aid program in the 1950s as larger countries like the United States, Britain, and France were doing. It had an aid administration unit housed in the Department of Trade and Commerce, but the money flowed through multilateral mechanisms—capital assistance for infrastructure through the Colombo Plan, and most technical assistance through the UN and its specialized agencies. Keenleyside stood near the centre of early Canadian technical assistance thought, moving fluidly from UN official to shaper of Canadian public opinion to colleague and lobbyist of Canadian policy makers. His role helped to position Canadian aid in a multilateral, UN-centred position in the years to follow.

Canada's government gradually moved in the 1950s to becoming the leading booster, if not the top donor, to UN technical assistance. It could not effectively act alone, but its voice could be magnified in UN forums. The UN's relative success in the development aid field in turn reflected well on the world organization, which was as policy makers in Ottawa wished it. In technical assistance, Canada was a major player.

Technical assistance was mainly about economic development, but it was not solely a "Samaritan" program of giving. Its diplomatic aspects also helped the UN raise its global stature and try to cool superpower tensions. Aid was also diplomacy, a point recognized quite explicitly in Ottawa as

well as in New York. Keenleyside's success in bringing the Soviet Union into UN technical assistance work was remarkable, given the close association in the public mind between technical assistance and US president Truman's foreign policy. Development diplomacy helped form a world order that promoted global integration at a time when decolonization and the Cold War raised fears of disintegration. In this sense, it also served Canadian foreign policy goals.

Notes

- 1 A. W. F. Plumptre to Escott Reid, 7 November 1950, RG 25, vol. 6574, file 11038-40, Library and Archives Canada (LAC).
- 2 Extract from cabinet conclusions, 1 November 1950, reprinted in Greg Donaghy, ed., *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER)*, vol. 16: 1950 (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 1266–68.
- 3 See, for instance, Pearson to Doug Abbott, 17 January 1951, reprinted in Greg Donaghy, ed., *DCER*, vol. 17: 1951 (Ottawa: Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1996), 1042–45.
- 4 Extract from cabinet conclusions, 25 October 1950, reprinted in *DCER*, 16:1260–62.
- 5 Jonathan B. Bingham, *Shirt-Sleeve Diplomacy: Point 4 in Action* (New York: John Day, 1953), 21.
- 6 Truman's inaugural address, 20 January 1949, https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/50yr_archive/inagural20jan1949.htm; Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2002).
- 7 "Memorandum of points for consideration in the development of a twenty-year program for achieving peace through the United Nations," 6 June 1950, *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, vol. 1: Trygve Lie, 1946–1953 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), 301.
- 8 John Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929–41* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004), 16.
- 9 Hugh L. Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh Keenleyside*, vol. 1: *Hammer the Golden Day* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1981), 457.
- 10 "Chinese Immigration," memorandum by Hugh L. Keenleyside, 30 December 1936, Keenleyside Papers, vol. 8, file: Canada and China; "The Oriental Problem in Canada," confidential report of the Board of Review, chaired by H. L. Keenleyside, LAC; Keenleyside Papers, vol. 11, file: Oriental Immigration, 1935–1939, LAC.

- 11 Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 17 March 1943, item 26243, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=26243&>.
- 12 "Memorandum for the Prime Minister," Mackenzie King papers, MG 26 J4, vol. 284, LAC.
- 13 Shelagh Grant, "Hugh Llewellyn Keenleyside: Commissioner of the Northwest Territories, 1947–1950," *Arctic Profiles* 43, no. 1 (1990): 81.
- 14 David Quiring, *CCF Colonialism in Northern Saskatchewan: Battling Parish Priests, Bootleggers, and Fur Sharks* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).
- 15 Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 16 November 1948, item 31923, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=31923&>.
- 16 Robert Winters to J. W. Pickersgill, 3 February 1950, L. S. St. Laurent Papers, vol. 96, file D-54-D, LAC.
- 17 Keenleyside, *Memoirs*, vol. 2: *On the Bridge of Time* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 326–27, 334; "Latin America: Expert Assistance Rendered to Date," S-0441-1417-01, United Nations Archives and Records Administration (UNARMS).
- 18 Glenn J. Dorn, "Pushing Tin: U.S.-Bolivian Relations and the Coming of the National Revolution," *Diplomatic History* 35, no. 2 (April 2011): 215–16.
- 19 Note on Secretariat inter-departmental meeting, 30 August 1949, S-0441-1417-04, UNARMS; Memo by Robenborg in history of Bolivia requests, 1 Oct. 1949, S-039-0022-09, UNARMS.
- 20 Report of the United Nations Preparatory Mission to Bolivia on Technical Assistance, 9 December 1949, S-0369-0022-09, UNARMS.
- 21 Report of the UN mission of technical assistance to Bolivia, 1951, Keenleyside Papers, vol. 8, file: Bolivia [1], LAC.
- 22 Keenleyside, *Memoirs*, 2:336.
- 23 Indonesian Ambassador to UK Subandrio, speech to Scottish Provisional Committee for War on Want, Glasgow, 21 November 1953; US Secretary of Agriculture Charles F. Brannan, cited in Charles Wolf Jr., *Foreign Aid: Theory and Practice in Southern Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 63.
- 24 Keenleyside Bolivia travel diary, Keenleyside Papers 30-12, LAC.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Robert J. Alexander, *The Bolivian National Revolution* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1958), 245–47.
- 27 Working Paper 6: UN Technical Assistance in Bolivia, for Seminar on evaluation of UN Technical Assistance, McGill University, 11–12 March 1954, S-0441-1515-06, UNARMS.

- 28 Oral History Interview of Margaret Anstee, in *The Complete Oral History Transcripts from UN Voices*, CD-ROM (New York: United Nations Intellectual History Project, 2007), 47–48.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 30 St. Laurent to Keenleyside, 8 September 1950, St. Laurent Papers, vol. 96, file D-54-D, LAC.
- 31 Walter O’Hearn, “Keenleyside Favored For Major Post At United Nations,” *Montreal Star*, 14 July 1950.
- 32 “Dr. Keenleyside,” *Winnipeg Free Press* editorial, 16 September 1950.
- 33 Stursberg broadcast transcript, 9 September 1950, Keenleyside Papers, vol. 30, file: UNTAA appointment 1950, LAC.
- 34 Hugh Keenleyside, *International Aid: A Summary, with Special Reference to the Programmes of the United Nations* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966), 230.
- 35 Keenleyside to Coldwell, 5 May 1952, Keenleyside Papers, vol. 12, file: Coldwell, M.J., LAC.
- 36 Keenleyside to Escott Reid, 8 October 1958, Escott Reid Papers, vol. 34, file: Keenleyside, Hugh L., LAC.
- 37 The case for Canadian participation in UN technical assistance was made successfully in External Affairs memorandum to cabinet, cabinet document 158-50, RG 25, vol. 3701, file 5475-DU-1-40[FP], LAC. Pledges rose from that point.
- 38 “Mr. Keenleyside’s Trip to Canada,” [1953], S-0441-1431-11, UNARMS.
- 39 Keenleyside speech on “Economic Development and Social Welfare as Roads to Peace,” McGill University School of Social Work, 15 February 1955, Keenleyside Papers, 28-15, LAC.
- 40 Pearson speech to parliament, 21 February 1951, Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, 21st Parliament, 4th Session, vol. 1, 537–38.
- 41 Almonte Ministerial Association to Louis St. Laurent, 12 May 1951, RG 25, vol. 6575, file 11038-40 [7.1], LAC; Memorandum from office of SSEA to Acting USSEA, 8 January 1954, RG 25, vol. 8389, file 11038-40 [15], LAC.
- 42 Minutes of Colombo plan group, 16 January 1953, RG 25, vol. 6576, file 11038-40 [11.1], LAC.
- 43 Australian Cabinet submission 339, 19 February 1953, A4940, C1050, National Archives of Australia (NAA); Cabinet submission 10, undated [June 1954], A4940, C1050, NAA.
- 44 Keenleyside personal letter to Pearson, 17 June 1953, in Donald Barry, ed., *DCER*, vol. 19: 1953, 526–28.
- 45 Keenleyside to Pearson, 17 June 1953, Keenleyside Papers, vol. 25, file: Pearson, L.B., LAC.
- 46 *Ibid.*, Keenleyside to Pearson, 10 August 1953.

- 47 Summary charts of pledges to EPTA, RG 25, vol. 6090, file 5475-DU-1-40[19.1], LAC; Keenleyside to Pearson, 15 November 1956, Keenleyside Papers, vol. 25, file: Pearson, L.B., LAC. Figures for charts drawn from Olav Stokke, *The UN and Development: From Aid to Cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).
- 48 Figures and chart data from 1954 posts list, S-0441 series, UNARMS.
- 49 For instance, Cranford Pratt, ed., *Canadian International Development Assistance Policies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994).
- 50 TAA memorandum, John Fried to Keenleyside, 15 January 1952, S-0441-1416-01, UNARMS.
- 51 Recruitment letter, signed by David Judd, Technical Cooperation Service, Department of Trade and Commerce, 6 April 1956, RG 74/1980-81/36-7C-7-74, LAC.
- 52 Keenleyside 1952 welcome letter, S-0441-1483-03, UNARMS.
- 53 Keenleyside, *International Aid*, 220.
- 54 See, for instance, Karen Minden, *Canadian Development Assistance: The Medical Missionary Model in West China, 1910–1952* (Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, 1989); Richard R. Mallon, *The New Missionaries: Memoirs of a Foreign Advisor in Less-Developed Countries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Institute for International Development, 2000); Nick Cullather, "Modernization Theory," in *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 2nd ed., ed. Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 212–20; Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2002); H. W. Arndt, *Economic Development: The History of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); M. P. Cowen and R. W. Shenton, *Doctrines of Development* (London: Routledge, 1996); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation-Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Ruth Compton Brouwer, *Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902–69* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations," *Journal of World History* 19, no. 3 (2008): 251–74.
- 55 Carol Chin, "Beneficent Imperialists: American Women Missionaries in China at the Turn of the Century," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 3 (2003): 327–52.
- 56 Ruth Compton Brouwer, "When Missions Became Development: Ironies of 'NGOization' in Mainstream Canadian Churches in the 1960s," *Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 4 (2010): 661–93.
- 57 Mary M. Young and Susan J. Henders, "'Other Diplomacies' and World Order: Historical Insights from Canadian–Asian Relations," *Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 11 (2016): 351–82.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Arturo Escobar, "Planning," in Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *The Development Dictionary* (London: Zed Books, 2010), 149.

- 60 *I Saw Technical Assistance Change Lives* (New York: United Nations, 1952).
- 61 Speech by Arthur Goldschmidt, TAA, undated but from early 1950s, Eleanor M. Hinder papers, 770/7, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).
- 62 David Owen, "The United Nations Expanded Program of Technical Assistance – A Multilateral Approach," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 323 (1959): 25–32; Robin Gendron, *Towards a Francophone Community: Canada's Relations with France and French Africa, 1945–1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).
- 63 Economic and Social Council debates, cited in Alvin Z. Rubinstein, *Soviets in International Organizations: Changing Policy toward Developing Countries, 1953–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 34–35.
- 64 Keenleyside USSR travel diary, Keenleyside papers, LAC.
- 65 R. A. MacKay to Jules Léger, 2 February 1956, RG 25, file 5475-DU-1-40 [15.2], LAC.
- 66 Canadian UN delegation to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, 4 April 1955, RG 25, file 5475-DU-1-40[13.1], LAC.
- 67 Keenleyside, *International Aid*.
- 68 *Partners in Development*, Report of the Commission on International Development chaired by Lester Pearson (New York: United Nations, 1969). On the report see Kevin Brushett, "Partners in Development? Robert McNamara, Lester Pearson, and the Commission on International Development, 1967–1973," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 26, no. 1 (2015): 84–102.

