

FROM THE DIRECTOR

PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE MIDST OF INTERNATIONAL TURMOIL

AS PEOPLE WITH A special interest in international affairs, we are all exhilarated and embarrassed these days. We are exhilarated because of the rapid and generally peaceful lifting of the sombre pall of the Cold War which has so darkened the international scene since the Second World War. We are embarrassed, or should be, because none of us predicted what would happen, when or how.

Peace and security are, of course, the indispensable foundations of any viable international order. What are peace and security likely to mean for us, and what we will need to do to secure them, over the coming decades?

For perhaps the first time, our entire species now shares security threats, and ones that come from sources other than human hostility. Global warming, for example, could conceivably do more damage to humanity over the next century than all the wars of history.

The threat to our planet's environment and life-support systems is only the most obvious symptom of our global interdependence. If we are unable to manage better issues such as trade, investment and protectionism, debt, exchange rates and technology flows, we will surely be bumping into each other harder and with more damage and danger. It is significant that even two years ago most Americans ranked their fear of Japanese economic competition as more threatening than the Soviet military challenge.

EAST-WEST MILITARY CONFRONTATION WILL remain a vital issue for our security. Even with successful negotiations in Vienna on conventional arms reductions, and strategic arms reductions between the superpowers, the USSR, the US and some other countries will remain heavily-armed states without enough mutual confidence and common values to rule out major armed conflict. As long as weapons modernization proceeds on both sides, with some seeking decisive military superiority, the level of danger will remain high.

Canadian objectives should be for the deepest possible military cuts, on a balanced basis, to leave the new Europe with much lower levels of arms and potential military threats. Simultaneously, we have a stake in building a new European security structure that will lock

in these lower levels of threat and provide for better ways of resolving the conflicts which will inevitably arise.

The idea for using the thirty-five nation framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) as the new umbrella under which all the European countries (except Albania) and the two North American partners could manage their new security relationships, has steadily gained the support of many governments – including our own. But so far Washington has been less enthusiastic. We now have an important task in convincing our American neighbours that an institutionalized CSCE is not a threat to NATO. NATO will retain its key role in providing a North Atlantic security guarantee.

This security guarantee will continue to call for a credible deterrent or counter to any potentially threatening military capability. It will continue to require significant, if much reduced, American forces stationed in Europe – to give credibility to the American strategic guarantee – and as long as there are American forces in Europe, I can see very strong arguments for significant Canadian forces there as well. It is time to stop the simplistic debate in Canada about leaving our NATO contingent in Europe or pulling it out, and start thinking about what kinds of things we might best be doing there.

WITH NATO STILL PROVIDING THE OVERALL guarantee, the most immediate security preoccupations within the new Europe may well be in managing disputes and small-scale conflicts derived from inter-ethnic or other frictions. We have already seen how some of the poisonous viruses of pre-War Europe have emerged as dangerous as ever from the ice of the Cold War. There is already serious talk of new machinery (possibly under the CSCE or the UN) for crisis management and peacekeeping.

If this role is to emerge and help to preserve the new security gains in Europe, there is no country better equipped and more trusted to help organize it than Canada. With limited troops but extensive experience, Canada may be able to make an especially useful contribution with a modest NATO contingent in Europe.

I do not see the East-West relationship as the most likely arena for serious military conflicts in the coming decades. In my Annual Statement this past January, I underlined the possibility of a “decade of proliferation” of weapons of mass destruction to many new countries. These trends are not inescapable, but they will become so unless we now muster, as an inter-

national community, an extraordinary effort to both control the diffusion of advanced weaponry, and start seriously promoting conflict resolution and regional security arrangements in all parts of the world.

ONCE AGAIN, THERE IS A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY for Canada – a trusted middle power, experienced mediator and peacekeeper, the fourth-ranking contributor to the UN system, with one of the largest and most respected aid programmes. We have earned a good measure of credibility and political goodwill, and these assets could be turned to good purpose in efforts to help with regional peace-building. But we must contend with a strange mid-life apathy and cynicism toward international institutions which could stifle these new efforts. Our closest friends and neighbours in the United States – who led in post-war order-building – are now the most alienated from the UN.

Surely it is the time for a group of like-minded governments, from all regions of the world, to advance the cause of these institutions for handling challenges like regional conflict, the arms trade, drug trafficking and terrorism, and environmental protection, as well as the continuing desperate need for economic improvement in the Third World.

Sometimes it is important to remind ourselves how the world sees us. In an admittedly imperfect world, Canada is seen by others as a model of peace and prosperity, a successful experiment in tolerance and practical compromise between two great language groups, diverse and far-flung regions and, now, practically all the world's cultures. It is these traits, and this political culture, which equip Canada for even greater roles in the new world order which seems to be emerging.

Happily, most foreigners do not yet know how we Canadians have faltered in recent months in our trusteeship at home of these scarce and precious commodities of tolerance and practical compromise. Those of us who work in the foreign policy field hope that they can be fully restored before the world finds out that they were ever in jeopardy. □

– BERNARD WOOD

This column is based on an address given in mid-April by Bernard Wood to a meeting of Le Conseil des relations internationales de Montréal.