

improve confidence; such a development, besides being important in itself, could lead to further progress in arms control and disarmament. Within the NATO alliance, Canada has been a consistent and strong supporter of the aims of MBFR and has participated actively in the formulation of policy and the conduct of the negotiations.

### **Theatre Nuclear Force (TNF) modernization and arms control**

One of the major issues facing the NATO Alliance in 1979 was the question of modernizing NATO's theatre nuclear forces (TNF). For over two years, the Alliance had been studying the problem of how best to counter a continuing expansion of Soviet nuclear capabilities in Europe, notably the deployment in recent years of large numbers of the new SS-20 intermediate-range multiple-warhead mobile nuclear missile and the "Backfire" supersonic bomber. As Soviet longer-range theatre weapons gained in numbers and improved in quality, those of NATO remained static, and some were becoming obsolete. At the same time the Alliance, conscious of the desirability of mutual restraints on these weapons, considered how agreed limitations on theatre nuclear forces might be negotiated with the Soviet Union.

Decisions on these questions were made more difficult by an intense and sustained Soviet diplomatic and propaganda campaign against NATO's modernization plans. The culmination of the campaign was a speech given by President Brezhnev in East Berlin on October 6, 1979 in which the Soviet leader called on NATO to abandon its modernization plans—without, however, offering in return any similar abandonment of ongoing Soviet theatre nuclear weapons programs.

At a special meeting of foreign and defence ministers in Brussels on December 12, NATO decided to proceed with plans to produce and deploy in Europe, beginning in 1983, a number of new ballistic and cruise missiles. Each new warhead thus introduced would replace an older one, with the result that there would be no increase in the total number of nuclear weapons available to NATO. At the same time, NATO ministers decided that the Soviet Union should be invited to engage in arms control negotiations seeking agreed limits on the numbers of these weapons on both sides. This offer to negotiate was officially communicated to the Soviet Union a few days later, but, in view of the intense Soviet effort to prevent a NATO modernization decision, an immediate favourable response was not to be expected.