

providing as between ourselves against the possibility of great surprise attack, thus lessening danger and relaxing tensions.

"Likewise we will make more easily attainable a comprehensive and effective system of inspection and disarmament, because what I propose, I assure you, would be but a beginning."

The British and French leaders indicated immediately that they would respect and join such an overflight regime. The Soviet delegation promised to study the idea but appeared wary, with Nikita Khrushchev complaining at one point that the concept was "nothing more than a bald espionage plot against the USSR." By the time he left Geneva, Eisenhower was convinced that the Soviets would not accept his proposal.

The Canadian government welcomed

What Canada Said

The following is from a statement issued in September 1957 by then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker in support of Open Skies.

"In order to ensure that all parties to the agreement are carrying out their obligations, and in order to diminish the dangers of surprise attack, the Western Powers have put forward a number of proposals regarding control and inspections.... They would include provisions for aerial and ground inspection designed to assist in guarding against surprise attack. It is our belief that it is of the greatest importance to have in operation such systems of inspection if we are to ensure that under a disarmament treaty the nations will enjoy no less security than their present defences provide. Because of this belief, the Canadian government has agreed, if the Soviet Union will reciprocate, to the inclusion of either the whole or a part of Canada in an equitable system of aerial inspection and will do its utmost to ensure that the system works effectively." ■

Eisenhower's proposal and played a considerable role in advancing the discussions on Open Skies that took place over the next few years. These talks centred on the possibility of establishing various Open Sky zones, and it was in this context that Canada proposed an Arctic zone in August 1957. Eisenhower had been correct in his initial assessment, however; the USSR was not disposed to consider any proposal for overflights sympathetically at that time.

The institution, beginning in 1956, of American high-altitude U-2 photo-reconnaissance flights, and the advent of the ballistic missile age, which effectively began with the launch of the Soviet Sputnik in 1957, also dampened enthusiasm for Open Skies in the US administration. Little was heard of Open Skies during the next 30 years.

Open Skies Reborn

Shortly after taking office in January 1989, US President George Bush asked his advisors to undertake a thorough review of arms control issues with an eye to developing initiatives. During the course of regular arms control consultations with their American counterparts in April, Canadian officials became aware that a renewal of Open Skies was under consideration as one of these initiatives.

Canada was of the view that while Open Skies would be an excellent initiative in a bilateral USA-USSR context, it would be of even greater value if it included the territory of all members of NATO and the WTO, and if those states could also participate in the program of overflights. On May 2 Prime Minister Brian Mulroney wrote to President Bush with Canada's views, and on May 4 he discussed the subject with the President, urging him to put forward the proposal and to enlarge it to include all NATO and WTO states. On May 11, the President phoned the Prime Minister to tell him that he intended to proceed with the initiative, in an expanded form.

The President publicly proposed Open Skies in a speech to the graduating class of Texas A&M University on May 12. He suggested that Eisenhower's original plan be explored again, "but on a broader, more intrusive and radical basis." The President elaborated on his initial statement later that month in Brussels, and the plan was endorsed by NATO leaders in a communique on May 30.

Canadian officials spent the summer quietly encouraging their counterparts in Western and Eastern Europe to consider Open Skies. On September 21, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze indicated to US Secretary of State James Baker, during discussions at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, that the USSR would participate in an international conference on the subject. On September 24, Canada offered to host a conference to negotiate an Open Skies agreement. Invitations to attend were extended to all members of NATO and the WTO.

Throughout the fall of 1989, representatives of the member states of NATO met frequently in Brussels to arrive at a consensus position on the structure of an eventual Open Skies regime. The result of this process is the Basic Elements Paper, issued on December 15, which sets out the unanimous view of the 16 NATO countries as to how an Open Skies regime would work in practice.

The Ottawa Conference will be held February 12 to 28. Representatives of NATO and the WTO will meet in Budapest, Hungary, January 30 to February 1 to discuss organizational and procedural questions related to the Conference and to evaluate the trial Open Skies overflight of Hungary by Canada (see pp. 7-8).

The Ottawa Conference is expected to be followed later in the year by a conference in Budapest to complete the negotiation of an agreement. Thirty-five years after its birth, Open Skies is nearing fruition. ■