REDUCING THE LEVEL OF FEAR

In Stockholm last year, Canada, the United States, and all the countries of Europe except Albania agreed on measures designed to reduce the risk of war through surprise attack or miscalculation.

BY MICHAEL TUCKER

ON 19 SEPTEMBER 1986, THE clocks were stopped at the *Kulturhuset* in Stockholm in order to allow the thirty-five national delegations therein a last clear chance to meet their deadline for agreement on a package of "confidence and security-building measures" (CSBMs) designed to reduce the risk of war in Europe through miscalculation or surprise attack. NATO, Warsaw Pact, and neutral and non-aligned countries, party to this Stockholm meeting of the Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE), were in fact able to reach agreement on a CSBM document that 22 September, some one hundred and seventy-eight plenary and countless working sessions after the conference formally began in January 1984. This was an important, if modest and little noticed, event in the contemporary history of arms control and East-West relations.

THE STOCKHOLM CDE GOT underway in a sombre atmosphere of heightening East-West tensions, and at a time when all other East-West arms control dialogues had been adjourned. The 1986 Stockholm accord, moreover, remains the first, and only, East-West security agreement which has been reached since the signing of the second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) in 1979. Just as important as the political symbolism of the CDE agreement are the complex military provisions which it contains for the annual forecasting, notification, observation, and inspection of large-scale troop manoeuvres in Europe.

These provisions are binding upon the thirty-five signatories to the Stockholm accord, requiring them to give prior notification of troop exercises above certain defined thresholds within specific periods of time. They also include, for the first time since 1945, an East-West agreement over the principle of mandatory on-site inspections of military facilities, to provide for the verification of compliance with the Treaty. The CDE agreement will thus provide a test for the efficacy of on-site inspection measures. Another important feature, from the standpoint of Western security, is that it will also provide a test for Soviet acceptance of this principle and the mellowing of the historic Russian penchant for secrecy in all matters military. It is to be noted that the agreement applies to a zone which extends from the Atlantic to the Ural mountains, encompassing the entire European sector of Soviet Russia.

The relevance of the Stockholm experience for Canada must be understood in the broad context of Canada's NATO membership and of its staunch commitment to what is termed the "CSCE process." Canada has been from the outset a party to the post-1972 dialogues of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), and was a signatory, as well as important contributor, to the 1975 Helsinki CSCE Final Act. The Stockholm talks were an integral part of the CSCE process, having been mandated by the 1983 Madrid CSCE Review Conference to strengthen and extend the confidence-building measures which had been agreed upon at Helsinki. Yet Canada was invited to participate in the talks which led to the Helsinki accord because of its membership in NATO. It was Alliance participation which provided this country with an entrée to the CSCE in the first instance, and at Helsinki, as at Stockholm later on, and at all the CSCE review conferences, Canada acted as a loyal team member of the NATO caucus. This was not always an easy diplomatic task, however, because of intra-alliance differences over the aims of the CSCE.

CANADA HAS ALWAYS SEEN THE CSCE debates – in political as well as military and arms control terms – as a measure of its interest as a North American power in European security and co-operation. At the time of the Helsinki Conference, Canada directed its energies toward the fulfillment of a humanistic conception of East-West détente, which included a recognition of human rights and a freer movement of peoples across national boundaries. These efforts were a clear challenge to the harsher aspects of Soviet authoritarianism, and at the same time they were also seen by Washington as a fetter upon its quest for superpower strategic arms control. While Canada was more sensitive to the logic of SALT than its West European allies, the CSCE was initially a useful medium through which Canada could distance itself, for both domestic and West European consumption, from an American conception of East-West détente which was largely confined to military-strategic stability.

At Stockholm, it was clear from the outset that the United States and the Soviet Union would be the key players, and the conference would have foundered without their political will to reach agreement. In the absence of any likely East-West accord over conventional or intermediate nuclear force reductions in Europe, moreover, CSBMs represented the most promising and perhaps the only arms control regime for that war-prone theatre. And because of its political and symbolic importance for the future of East-West security relations Stockholm, it has been said, was "condemned to succeed." But down to the final hours of the conference its lesser participants could not take it for granted that the major powers had the political will to agree.

The Stockholm experience showed that multilateral arms control can work. Yet initial and recurring American reluctance to become fully engaged in the exercise made Canadian participation both necessary and opportune. At times a more constructive flexibility was required of Washington, for instance over the highly-intrusive on-site inspection measures it thought were necessary. And Ottawa recognized, perhaps more clearly than Washington, that the CDE was for the Soviet Union an expression of its long-standing interest in a pan-European security regime which might reduce the North American military presence in Europe. Thus, for Canada, this trend in Soviet thinking was a compelling reason for a stronger rather than a weaker Canadian-American commitment to the Stockholm negotiations.