

Policy

Disarmament

Soviet Proposal

In mid-January, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev announced a comprehensive arms control plan for the elimination of all nuclear weapons before the end of the century. (At the same time, the USSR's unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing was extended for an additional three months.) The proposal itself was a three-stage mechanism involving: firstly, a 50 percent reduction in US and Soviet missiles capable of reaching each other's territory and the elimination of intermediate-range missiles in the European zone; secondly, other nations would engage in the process as the superpowers continued their disarmament; and thirdly, a culmination in the year 2000 with a universal accord that "such weapons should never again come into existence" (*New York Times*, January 16). While the proposal still called for the US to abandon space missile defences, it significantly avoided including British and French arms in the primary stage — previously a major stumbling block to superpower arms control negotiations. US President Ronald Reagan "welcomed" the Soviet proposal, stating that the US and its allies would give the plan "careful study."

External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, speaking before the Commons January 23, outlined Canada's reaction to the Soviet proposal and the government's position on disarmament in general. Canada, said the Minister, regarded the proposal as worthy of "serious consideration," particularly the possibility of a Soviet shift closer to President Reagan's 1981 "zero option." Also "gratifying" was the "explicit Soviet recognition of the importance of verification . . . and the need for on-site inspection." However, Canada saw certain "disturbing preconditions" which could hamper negotiations.

While welcoming the Soviet proposal, Canada urged the superpowers to "reinforce the status and authority" of existing arms treaties (both SALT and ABM) through "full compliance." Deviation from such compliance would threaten both the credibility and viability of arms control,

Mr. Clark added. With the prospects for progress on arms control "clearly linked to an improvement in the general East-West relationship," Canada would increase its efforts to encourage an intensification of negotiations. This "intensified" disarmament policy focused on three elements: compliance with existing treaties; the development of verification mechanisms; and "confidence building" through increased political dialogue, consultation and cooperation with East bloc countries (External Affairs statement, January 23, *The Citizen*, January 24).

Responding to Mr. Clark's statement, opposition members — Jean Chrétien speaking for the Liberals and Pauline Jewett for the NDP — questioned the Canadian stance toward SDI research. (The External Affairs Minister had emphasized that Canada's position on SDI was "rooted in the need to conform strictly with the provisions of the ABM treaty.") Mr. Chrétien stated that with the USSR and the US back at the negotiating table, the need for SDI as a pressure tactic had been lessened and research might be either "slowed down or frozen." Ms. Jewett, while calling the Soviet proposal for a five-year timetable "truly innovative," added that SDI, because of its "tremendous intermingling" of research, testing and development, required a "clear" statement on Canada's interpretation of research.

Environment

Acid Rain

In a speech delivered at Harvard University in early December, Canada's special acid rain envoy William Davis issued a further call for action on the part of the US. Mr. Davis, citing Canadian efforts, spoke of the need for the US to develop a consensus, put a political will behind it, and "take the kinds of steps that current law allows and beyond" (*Toronto Star*, December 4). With the US administration continuing in its refusal to act without additional research, Mr. Davis emphasized that the threat from acid rain was an