

REPORT FROM THE HILL



Visits to Ottawa

■ Ottawa played host to three eminent statesmen in quick succession in the late spring: first to UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuellar on 27 May; then on 29 to 30 May to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (the first visit by a Soviet leader since 1971); and finally to South African black activist and Deputy President of the African National Congress Nelson Mandela, who addressed both Houses of Parliament on 18 June – a highly unusual event for a non-head of government.

The Middle East

■ Prior to the first two visits, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark confirmed in the House on 22 and 24 May that Middle East questions would be addressed with Pérez de Cuellar and Gorbachev. On 22 May he indicated that the Canadian Ambassador to Israel had that day expressed to Israeli authorities shock and great concern at the increasing violence in the occupied territories.

On 14 June, following the formation of a new Israeli government, NDP External Affairs critic Bill Blaikie asked the Minister in the House whether the government would consider using its position on the UN Security Council to influence the development of a peacekeeping force that would finally be acceptable to Israel to operate in the occupied territories to protect Palestinians. Mr. Clark responded that Canada would be prepared to apply its influence toward that end, but underlined the Member's own suggestion that "any action by the United Nations would have to be something that was acceptable to Israel."

Following the pipe-bombing death in Israel of a Canadian

woman, Mr. Clark, on 28 July, strongly condemned "this vicious act of terrorism" which he stated served only to perpetuate the distressing cycle of violence which characterized the Middle East dispute. Only five days later, on 2 August, he was again obliged to address the question of violence in the region following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. He termed Iraq's actions "totally unacceptable" and promised that Canada would work with other members of the UN Security Council to ensure an "effective international response." (See "Report from the Security Council" for more on the UN and Iraq.)

NATO and European Policy

■ On 17 May in the Commons – following a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Kananaskis, Alberta the week before – NDP MP Bill Blaikie challenged Defence Minister William McKnight for not opposing modernization of all nuclear weapons. The Minister rejected the Member's allegation and insisted that the testing of US cruise missiles in Canada did not constitute the testing of nuclear missiles, but of "a guidance system."

Minister Clark addressed the broader questions of European policy in the House on 31 May and indicated the five broad areas of discussion that had taken place during the recent visit of Mr. Gorbachev. He described the institutional pillars of Canadian policy toward Europe as: a new, more political, direction for NATO (to which Canada's military contribution was "bound to decline"); an expanded role for the CSCE; and an intensified relationship with the European Community.

Environmental Issues

■ There were frequent questions in the House during the spring weeks relating to questions of global warming. NDP Environment critic Jim Fulton was particularly persistent in Question Period, pressing the government

to adopt measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly. On 10 May, Herb Gray, the acting Opposition Leader, joined in the attack by referring to a leaked US State Department telex which implied that Canada had agreed to join forces with the Americans "to block further progress in the fight against global warming" in discussions to be held in Bergen, Norway later in the week.

This was strenuously denied by then Environment Minister Lucien Bouchard who stated in Bergen that Canada was committed to the stabilization of carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000 at current levels. Liberal MP Charles Caccia tried unsuccessfully in the House on 23 May to have the Prime Minister confirm this statement, but it was later confirmed on 28 May by Acting Environment Minister Robert de Cotret who replaced Mr. Bouchard.

Asian Policy Shifts

■ A Canadian ban on aid to Indochina was lifted in January. By mid-May, Ottawa had agreed to commit \$8 million over five years to humanitarian projects in Cambodia, matching money from Canadian non-governmental organizations. Then, at the end of May Mr. Clark declared that Canada would no longer support the US-sponsored resolution at the United Nations that has given Cambodia's UN seat to the rebel coalition that includes the Khmer Rouge rather than to the Hun Sen government that is backed by Vietnam. All of these moves came in advance of the widely-hailed announcement of 18 July that the US would open a dialogue with Vietnam, which could include a shift in their UN position toward Cambodia.

The Cambodian seat at the UN was a major topic at the ministerial conference of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations which opened on 27 July in Jakarta, Indonesia and which Mr. Clark attended following an official visit to Japan. On both stops he proposed a new North Pacific security organization

with Canada, the United States, the Soviet Union, China, Japan and the two Koreas as members to cope with regional instability in the wake of the Cold War.

Parliamentary Short Notes

■ Eight House standing committees collaborated on 23 and 24 April in an unprecedented Parliamentary Forum on Global Climate Change under the leadership of Dr. Harry Brightwell, chair of the House Agriculture Committee.

■ Mr. Clark, in an appearance before the House External Affairs Committee on 24 May, noted the meeting of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on Southern Africa that he chaired in Abuja, Nigeria on 16 and 17 May. He said that the committee was universally optimistic about changes in South Africa, while recognizing that they were partial and preliminary and that sanctions "must remain until there is clear evidence of irreversible change."

■ On 13 June the House Standing Committee on the Environment tabled a report, Part I of its "Our Changing Atmosphere" series, called *Deadly Releases CFCs*.

■ The House of Commons External Affairs Committee tabled two reports in the House on 18 June, one (*Report on the Committee's Visit to the Soviet Union and the Germanies*) the work of the full committee, and the other (*Securing Our Global Future: Canada's Stake in the Unfinished Business of Third World Debt*) the report of a sub-committee specifically struck to consider international debt issues under the leadership of Walter McLean.

■ On the same day, the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the House Standing Committee on Human Rights and Disabled Persons tabled its third report which reviewed Canada's policy regarding human rights vis-a-vis international financial institutions and international trade including military equipment exports. □

– GREGORY WIRICK