

Overview

CANADA AND WORLD AFFAIRS

In the year covered by this report, political-strategic concerns focused on the conduct of East-West relations. After several years of ideological stand-off, the prospect of a summit meeting between President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev provided some ground for optimism. Although there were few concrete achievements, the Geneva Summit did improve the tone of East-West relations. Statements from Soviet and US leaders in subsequent months pointed towards the establishment of a more co-operative and productive relationship.

Arms control negotiations in the past year remained stalled. Differences remained on many strategic nuclear issues. The US commitment to research on the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) remained firm while the Soviet Union continued to portray this research as raising the spectre of a new space-based arms race. The United States continued to put forward evidence that the Soviet Union had not complied with the provisions of the SALT II Agreement, raising the possibility that the United States would announce it no longer felt bound by SALT II. Canada joined West European and other leaders to urge strongly that serious and realistic arms control negotiations begin.

Several regions of the world continued to experience conflict, although there were also optimistic signs. In the Philippines and in Haiti, the regimes of President Marcos and President Duvalier, respectively, were brought to an end through public demonstrations and support for alternative and more democratic forms of government. In Latin America, despite severe economic difficulties, democratic regimes in a number of countries continued to strengthen their popular base of support.

In Central America, modest improvements in the political situation of El Salvador were often undone by violence from both the left and the right. In Guatemala, a new President was democratically elected and there were hopes that despite the enormous difficulties facing a civilian regime in the country, Guatemalan democracy may take hold. In Nicaragua, the US-backed Contras continued to clamp down on rival opinions in that country. The Contradora Group continued to work for a regional solution to the turmoil in Central America but little real progress was achieved.

In the Middle East, the situation of recent years continued, with little prospect for a major breakthrough among the conflicting parties. The Iran-Iraq war raged with heavy casualties on both sides. The possibility of a more co-operative relationship between the Government of Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization eroded. In Lebanon, the situation remained highly unstable with Syria emerging as the dominant outside influence. In Afghanistan, the Soviet invasion exacted a very heavy cost on the civilian population. Allegations of major human rights abuses continued, with testimony from Afghan refugees describing the harsh and oppressive

measures being used to crush popular opposition to the Soviet-backed Kabul regime.

The situation in South Africa deteriorated over the past year. Despite pressures from around the world, the South African government showed no inclination to dismantle the fundamental elements of its racist policy of *apartheid* and replace it with a democratic form of government. At the Commonwealth Summit in Nassau, Canada played a leading role in developing a consensus position on South Africa. The Commonwealth appointed a Group of Eminent Persons, in which Canada participated, to investigate the situation in South Africa and determine whether there was a genuine will to change. Violence in South Africa increased and over the year many hundreds of blacks died.

Terrorism increased and innocent persons around the world, including Canadians, died in attacks designed to instil fear in civilian populations. There was growing evidence that some states were offering financial and political support to various terrorist groups. Canada sought to work with others to understand and root out a scourge that increasingly endangered innocent lives and heightened international tension.

Concerns for security went hand in hand with the Canadian government's desire to protect and promote Canadian sovereignty and independence in the world. From environmental security to territorial integrity, the government defended Canadian sovereign interests strongly. In the Arctic, it confirmed Canadian sovereignty over Arctic waters and proclaimed straight baselines around the perimeter of the Arctic Archipelago; decided to construct an icebreaker capable of year-round service in the Canadian Arctic; and began to put in place a number of proposals to extend effective Canadian control over the Arctic region.

More effective observance abroad of internationally agreed standards of human rights remained a key Canadian foreign policy goal. Canada hosted an East-West meeting of experts on human rights in Ottawa as part of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) process. Bilaterally, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, raised human rights issues while visiting the Soviet Union. The government continued its work to assist refugees, particularly from South-East Asia. At the United Nations and in other forums, Canada has persevered as an active critic of regimes which consistently abuse fundamental human rights.

Canada worked through multilateral forums such as the Commonwealth Summit in Jamaica and the Francophonie Summit in Paris to advance foreign policy priorities in both the political and economic spheres. These occasions provided key opportunities to reinforce and amplify the themes which the Canadian government sought to stress in its foreign policy through bilateral contacts.