

It is almost as though the diversity, pluralism, and freedom of expression which we are determined to preserve through the Alliance, are not seen as appropriate within the Alliance.

The Alliance in arms against itself is a paradox rich with historical allusion. NATO will avoid that fate if we are wise. But institutions cannot grow to meet new challenges if their level of debate — their intellectual universe of discourse — does not expand to meet the changing realities of our environment.

Therefore, I am uneasy with these paradoxes. I am not satisfied with our ability to analyze and understand the complexities of an entirely new phase in East-West relations. I am not reassured by the posture and rhetoric of an earlier wartime age — an age, by the way, in which Canadian nerves were not found to falter.

For it is not our nerves which are being tested now, and these are not playing fields on which we stand and cheer. It is the killing-ground of life itself — and what is being tested is whether the force and will of our statecraft can reverse the momentum of the nuclear arms race.

When I spoke in June of last year at the Second United Nations Special Session on Disarmament, I said:

“... I understand full well the people's anguish and confusion. The nuclear debate is difficult and seems to pursue an inverse logic. It deals with power that, by common consent, is unusable. It argues for more nuclear weapons in order that, in the end, there may be fewer. It perceives the vulnerability of cities and of human beings as an element of stability in the nuclear balance. And worst of all, the debate goes on without much evidence of any light at the end of the tunnel.”

More than a year later, I still see little light ahead. How did we arrive at such an impasse? Some of the answers lie in the ragged course of East-West relations over the past 15 years. Those relations have an innate tendency to defy management and control. They are animated by competing philosophies and civilizations, and armed with weaponry that is global in scope. Like Guelphs and Ghibellines, the two sides advocate radically different visions of political order, human values and social behaviour.

As Canadians, we know where we stand. We have a distinguished record of accomplishment in working for international peace and security. NATO has without doubt been one of the instruments preventing nuclear war for the past 35 years. Canada has done pioneering work in the United Nations and elsewhere on arms control and disarmament. Our nuclear power industry has performed as experts on safeguards agreements and has given us a special commitment to the cause of non-proliferation. We have continuously pressed for a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, for a convention to prohibit chemical weapons, and for the prohibition of all weapons for use in outer space.

We have played our part in periods of co-operation, and pulled our weight in periods of confrontation. We have identified a distinctive Canadian space in East-West relations, determined by our history and geography, by our membership in NATO, by successive waves of immigration, by such priorities as trade and human rights, and by that sense of realism which is, to paraphrase John Holmes, both the achievement and the comfort of the middle-power's middle age.