

OVERVIEW

CANADA AND WORLD AFFAIRS IN 1979

1979 was a year of increased global tensions. Instability arising in one sector of the international system had a tendency to spill quickly into other areas. For example, the political developments in Iran in 1979 caused economic shock waves amongst both developed and developing countries. The OPEC price hikes of 1979 had significant political consequences. As the year closed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan threatened East-West relations across a broad spectrum. All of these events focused attention on the strategic links between oil, politics and military developments. Some military and political developments had particularly tragic consequences in 1979. The war in Kampuchea and the invasion of Afghanistan forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their countries as refugees, causing political and economic difficulties for the countries of first asylum and a humanitarian problem which touched the world's conscience.

World order marked some progress in 1979 with agreements on the Common Fund, the Multilateral Trade Negotiations, SALT, Rhodesian elections and peace between Israel and Egypt. But in general, collective efforts to deal with the major problems of arms control, the limitation of conflict, and co-operative international economic development showed little progress, and sometimes serious setbacks. The growing need for collective efforts to deal with global problems, and the interdependence of such efforts, became more apparent in 1979.

1979 was a year which saw a change of government in Canada and a new Secretary of State for External Affairs—from Mr. Don Jamieson to Miss Flora MacDonald—in June. Nevertheless the central direction of Canadian foreign policy showed continuity, although there were of course changes of emphasis. Canada's international activities and those of the Department of External Affairs were guided first and foremost by the need to assure Canada's security and economic well-being. They were also guided by the requirement to reflect the concern of Canadians for the human dimension of foreign policy, by the need to promote Canadian unity and identity, and by the necessity of providing assistance to Canadians travelling and working outside of Canada. In working towards these goals, Canada actively participated in international organizations and meetings and engaged in bilateral consultations with various states, recognizing that the realization of many of Canada's foreign policy goals was only possible through co-operation with others. These activities abroad covered a number of

areas as diverse as dealing with threats to peace, managing the global economy, working towards the goal of disarmament and constructing an agreed framework for the regulation and sharing of the world's maritime resources.

A review of some areas of primary Canadian interest illustrates Canada's activities and foreign policy priorities in 1979.

CANADA'S SECURITY

Global instability and the search for peace

The two events which overshadowed all others were the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Both served to heighten the already volatile situation in Southwest Asia and in the Persian Gulf area, where Western interests were strongly engaged. The revolution in Iran underlined the strategic significance of petroleum to the West and also highlighted the danger of underestimating the attachment of peoples in the region to traditional values. Prior to the invasion of Afghanistan, the West had already become more sensitive to the growing Soviet military presence in the Gulf area; the invasion increased the possibility of a superpower confrontation in an area deemed vital to Western security. Canada took further steps to protect its citizens in the area and to consult with our allies regarding the political and military implications of this growing instability.

The Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia were not the only regions of tension. The occupation of Kampuchea by Vietnam and the military action against Vietnam by China created serious pressures in Southeast Asia. The plight of large segments of the Kampuchean population facing starvation and the flagrant abuse of human rights in both Kampuchea and Vietnam prompted Canada to seek actively a solution to these problems in the Security Council and elsewhere and to throw open its doors to large numbers of refugees from the region.

The Middle East remained an area of instability; fighting continued in Lebanon and tensions continued to exist between Israel and her Arab neighbours. One bright spot welcomed by Canada was the signing of the Treaty of Peace between Egypt and Israel ending 30 years of hostilities. This appeared to be one important step on the path to an overall solution to Middle East problems which remained elusive during 1979.