

Just over one month from now we will mark the first anniversary of a truly historic agreement. On December 6 of last year, General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and President Ronald Reagan signed the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Agreement. It was a landmark in modern times: for the first time ever it had been agreed that a whole class of nuclear weapons would be eliminated.

That was an achievement applauded by all Canadians. It demonstrated that East-West rivalry need not lead inexorably to catastrophe.

Next year we will commemorate another notable milestone: the 40th anniversary of the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. I mention this because it has everything to do with last December's success in eliminating a class of nuclear weapons.

Last year's agreement did not simply materialize from thin air. It was not a unilateral gesture of good will by a new leadership in the Soviet Union, anxious to demonstrate its new persona to the West. In fact, the genesis of the agreement began in the late 1970's, with a decision by the Soviets that was neither benign nor welcome.

I ask you to remember those times. The Soviet Union had just increased instability in Europe by deciding to deploy their SS-20s -- a new generation of intermediate range missiles -- weapons for which there were then no Western counterparts in Europe. NATO tried to persuade the Soviets not to deploy. But words didn't work; the Soviet missiles went in. So Canadian and other NATO Ministers took what is known as the "two track" decision -- one track deploying Western weapons in Europe; the other track inviting Moscow to negotiate a limit to such weapons on both sides.

The Soviet response was to stonewall the negotiations, and to try to arouse public opinion in the free societies of the West against the NATO decision. Their tactic depended heavily on mobilizing the peace movement in Western Europe against the NATO deployment.

Some of you will remember the rallies and the marches, accompanied by consistent Soviet diplomatic attempts to break the resolve and the unity of the West.

The Soviet Union won an enormous propaganda windfall from those deployment debates -- even though, as the figures in the INF Agreement now show us, the Soviet Union deployed four times as many warheads in Europe as the United States did.