

DISMANTLING THE COLD WAR

Although we do have substantial opportunities and responsibilities, it would be unrealistic to expect dramatic Canadian leadership in ending the Cold War.

Mikhail Gorbachev, a revolutionary Soviet leader and visionary world leader, has basically set the agenda and the pace, and that is fully appropriate from a Canadian viewpoint. It was Soviet expansionism and ideological hostility that triggered the Cold War, even though the West has fairly consistently led in the subsequent successive rounds of military modernization. It was thus up to Mr. Gorbachev to begin and lead the process of change, and he has done so. His first stated intentions for domestic and foreign policy reform were greeted with skepticism in the West, but this was apparently just as he had expected. His economic restructuring (*perestroika*) was under-girded and then overtaken by audacious new measures of openness (*glasnost*) and democratization (*democratzia*). In foreign policy, he outlined a sweeping new world-view – imperfectly captured in the English translation as “new thinking.” Both Soviet actions and (very importantly, given their traditions) Soviet rhetoric were substantially changed, in a number of regional conflicts. He made proposals of growing credibility, first, to provide accurate figures on Soviet military expenditures and then to cut troops and equipment, on an asymmetrical basis, both unilaterally and through arms control negotiations with the West. His unleashing, and even prodding, of liberalization and freedom of action for Eastern European states provided further proof of change and immense encouragement.

During 1989, Western governments and publics came to accept the reality of change in Soviet foreign and domestic policies and gradually overcame the long legacy of mistrust bred by previous Soviet initiatives. Different Western countries moved at different speeds in their acceptance of the Gorbachev revolution, and it is noteworthy that the Canadian government was one of the slowest. Perhaps in the tradition of Canada's highly-aggressive advocacy of human rights in East Bloc countries, External Affairs Minister Clark made a statement in January in which his recognition of the progress being made was submerged in a pessimistic appraisal of the ultimately unbridgable character of the East-West divide. Even while preparing for a prime ministerial visit to