

Overview

CANADA AND WORLD AFFAIRS

The year covered by this report — the fiscal year from April 1, 1986 to March 31, 1987 — was characterized by significant movement across a range of global issues. It was a year in which both opportunities and dangers came into sharper focus, challenging Canada and other countries to reassess relationships and strategies in the search for a more secure, more humane and more prosperous world. It was also a year in which the government set its imprimatur on an activist, internationalist foreign policy approach which many Canadians from all walks of life had helped to fashion.

The most dramatic developments over the period were in the area of East-West relations and arms control. After a number of years of harsh rhetoric and arms-length relations between the two superpowers, the year under review represented a more dynamic and hopeful phase. In the Soviet Union the "Gorbachev phenomenon" continued to fascinate Western publics and to dominate the process of internal change through economic restructuring, greater openness and democratization. On the East-West front, major arms control initiatives were advanced by both sides of the table, laying the groundwork for a possible agreement on the elimination of intermediate nuclear forces (INF) in Europe as well as for further progress in the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks. Significant developments affecting conventional arms control in Europe occurred as well in the form of an agreement between East and West to begin discussions on a new mandate for negotiating conventional arms control from the Atlantic to the Urals.

While the United States Administration showed signs of impatience with the constraints imposed by earlier arms control arrangements such as the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II) and the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, President Reagan continued to advance his own agenda of shifting from offensive to defensive deterrence and seeking a non-nuclear world.

At the Reykjavik Summit in October, the world was jarred into the realization that very significant arms control agreements could be in the offing. Events from then on showed that, despite the existence of major political and technical hurdles, there was a momentum for progress on arms control, especially on INF, which might produce significant agreements before the end of President Reagan's term of office.

Western countries continued to consult closely and effectively in addressing both the opportunities and problems posed by these developments in East-West relations; this was notwithstanding the effects of the Iran-Contra affair on the US Administration and European preoccupations about the implications for Alliance collective security of the kind of sweeping arms control measures discussed by the superpowers at Reykjavik.

Canada played its full role in supporting adherence to the existing arms control regimes, and within the Alliance worked for early significant progress in providing for security and stability at lower levels of nuclear and conventional armaments.

Regional conflicts and problems continued to present a challenge to world as well as regional security, to the improvement of economic and social conditions in the Third World, and to human rights. The lengthy and destructive war between Iran and Iraq dragged on, with neither side able decisively to defeat the other and with implications for the security of, and navigation in, the Persian Gulf region. Efforts to organize an international conference to resolve Arab-Israeli issues intensified, but without success; meantime the vicious factional warfare in Lebanon went on unabated. The level of violence in Central America increased sharply as intervention by outside powers was stepped up.

Fighting in Afghanistan and Cambodia showed no sign of abating, and despite indications by the Soviet Union that it wished to see solutions to both problems, no convincing steps were taken to this end. Terrorism, feeding on such conflicts, continued to claim innocent lives and provoked strong reactions, such as the US air raid on Tripoli.

The situation in South Africa grew worse; unrest in the black townships led to severe repression, and neighbouring states in Southern Africa became increasingly affected. Efforts by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, established at the Nassau meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) to facilitate real change and dialogue in South Africa, were frustrated. As Pretoria showed no real inclination to end the *apartheid* system, Canada took a leading role at the Heads of Government Review Meeting in London, where an additional series of measures aimed at inducing the South African government to change was adopted. Canada also increased its assistance to the Front Line States, which were trying to lessen their economic dependence on South Africa.

There were, nevertheless, bright spots in other parts of the world. A fragile democracy was reestablished in the Philippines. Democracy managed to survive in several of the major Latin American states despite acute economic problems. China continued to develop its relations with the West, notwithstanding a slowdown in the pace of internal reform. At the urging of Canada and other member states, a serious start was made on reforming the functioning of the United Nations.

The 1986 Paris Francophone Summit — more appropriately titled the Summit of Heads of State and Government of Countries Using French as a Common Language — was an historic event as well as a breakthrough in federal-