

Gorbachev as not trustworthy; that is, only one in ten Canadians seem to have the traditional cold war set of perceptions. More, in fact, have the opposite view; 17% regarded Reagan as not trustworthy and Gorbachev as trustworthy. The rest, around 40%, found both at least somewhat trustworthy on arms control. (See chart)

THIS "PLAGUE ON BOTH YOUR policies" sentiment emerges even more prominently on the other parallel questions. Almost half of those surveyed (46%) believed neither superpower leadership was genuinely interested in disarmament. Nearly six in ten (57%) expressed little or no confidence in both the American and the Soviet ability to handle world problems. And almost seven in ten (68%) believed both the US and USSR are trying to increase their areas of influence.

How then to best preserve the peace? Asked about the measures that would best do so, Canadians rejected increased weaponry and supported reductions of nuclear weapons. The CIIPS survey posed the following alternative statements: "Some people think that the best way to prevent war is for the West to increase its military strength so as to be more powerful than the Soviets. Others think that this would speed up the arms race and may lead to war." They were then asked: "What do you think? Should the West try to increase its military strength or not?" By more than a three to one margin (71% to 29%) Canadians said the West should not increase its military strength.

This prescription represents a substantial shift in attitude from the early 1960s. Exactly the same question was asked in a 1962 national survey conducted by the Canadian Peace Research Institute. At that time, almost six out of ten Canadians (58%) believed the best way to prevent war would be for the West to increase its military strength and gain superiority. Only about one in three (32%) thought the West should not increase its military capability. This pattern, twenty-five years later, is now reversed.

The CIIPS respondents were also asked in the mid-1987 survey whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that "the security of Western countries could best be increased by substantial reductions in both American and Soviet nuclear weapons." Over 80% agreed or strongly agreed.

The spring 1987 External Affairs survey posed two related questions – whether the "existence" of nuclear weapons and whether current nuclear practices and developments make war less likely or more likely. A clear majority said both make war more likely (54% and 59%, respectively). Distinct minorities thought these factors made war less likely (33% and 28%, respectively). (The pattern of responses to the second of these questions, that concerning nuclear

"practices and developments," would likely be different following December's missile agreement.)

IT IS IMPORTANT TO BE CLEAR WHAT these findings about Canadian attitudes do not show. They do not suggest a rampant anti-Americanism. It is not America Canadians are negative about, nor Americans. It is certain American policies. Nor do these findings provide evidence of some sort of "moral equivalence" thinking. There is no equivalence of Soviet and American social or political systems implied here. There is strong evidence, however, of a new tendency to distrust and be critical of both superpowers – of a new 'anti-superpowerism.'

It would also be tempting but wrong to cast Canadians' negative images of American policies as

entirely a product of the Reagan era. The American defence build-up of the 1980s and the tough talk of various US spokesmen have undoubtedly had some impact on Canadian and other allied publics' views. But the sources of discontent are also deeper.

The new mood would seem to arise from the high hopes, but ultimate failure, of the detente period, and especially from the promise, but now widely recognized illusion, of US-USSR arms control in the 1970s. The first two strategic weapons agreements (SALT I and II), most people appear to understand, controlled only the rate of growth of superpower nuclear weapons. The consequences of this fact, the enormous arsenals which are yet to be reduced even after December's summit, and the technological race which continues as yet unabated, are widely deplored by the public in Canada as in other Western countries. And the argument that the weapons are, on our side, necessary for maintaining our security, is simply no longer accepted.

That a start has been made to reducing these arsenals may well cause a shift in some perceptions. No radical alteration should be expected in the present tendency to perceive the two superpowers' policies in a more equivalent light. Rather, the December summit in Washington will probably result in a more positive view of both Soviet and American arms control and foreign policies alike.

The intermediate-range missile agreement, however welcome, is unlikely to be seen by most Western publics as an American accomplishment. It is therefore unlikely to be of relative advantage to Washington in influencing Western publics. Nor is the agreement likely to be seen as sufficient by itself to solve the security problem central to Canadians and others today – an overabundance of military weaponry and decided lack of political accommodation.

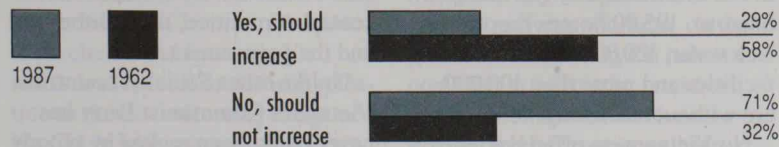
These attitudes, distinctly post-cold war and post-detente in nature, seem destined to play a continuing and key role in future policy debates within Canada and the Western alliance. □

Survey Results

The survey, the most extensive examination of these topics ever in Canada, was designed by the author and funded by CIIPS. It was conducted in June through September, 1987 by the Longwoods Research Group with a national sample selected randomly to be representative of Canadian households and chosen from a panel of 30,000 households maintained by Market Facts Ltd. The survey was conducted by mail and comprised a total of 1015 respondents. The response rate to the survey was 48%. The margin of error with a sample of this size is approximately $\pm 4\%$, 95 times out of 100.

Survey data and more detailed analysis based on the whole survey are available from the Institute in a Working Paper also written by Don Munton. The survey data used in this article, as well as in the Working Paper belong to CIIPS; the opinions and interpretations are those of Professor Munton.

Some people think that the best way to prevent war is for the West to increase its military strength so as to be more powerful than the Soviets. Others think that this would speed up the arms race and may lead to war. What do you think? Should the West try to increase its military strength or not?



How much confidence do you have in the ability of the – United States/Soviet Union – to deal wisely with present world problems?

