

process, if not for the SALT II treaty, and has indicated its intention to resume strategic arms limitation negotiations with the Soviet Union in search of a "better" treaty. This will, however, have to await a re-assessment and re-definition of United States defence priorities and policies.

As a strong advocate of the SALT process, Canada continues to endorse fully and support the search for agreement on measures that would help to limit the further growth and refinement of strategic nuclear arms, and so preserve and increase the stability of the strategic balance and lessen the risk of war.

Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks

Next to SALT, perhaps the most important ongoing East-West arms control negotiations are those of the Conference on the Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe, now known as MBFR, which began in Vienna in 1973. In these negotiations, NATO and the Warsaw Pact have been seeking agreement on ways to reduce the level of the opposing forces in central Europe with undiminished security for both sides. As had been anticipated from the outset, many difficulties have been encountered and progress has been slow. A principal obstacle has been the failure to agree on the size of the Eastern forces in the area which would be subject to reductions. The negotiations continued through 1980 with little or no forward movement. As with SALT and other arms control negotiations, the deterioration in the East-West political climate which followed the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and later the Soviet menace to Poland, could not but adversely affect the prospects for agreement.

Canada continues to believe that a mutual reduction of forces in central Europe would ease East-West tensions and

improve confidence. Such a development, besides being important in itself, could lead to further progress in arms control and disarmament. Within the North Atlantic Alliance, Canada has been a consistent and strong supporter of the aims of MBFR and has participated actively in the formulation of policy and the conduct of negotiations.

Theatre nuclear force modernization and arms control

One of the major issues facing the Alliance in recent years has been the question of modernizing NATO's theatre nuclear forces (TNF), which have remained static in numbers and have become increasingly obsolescent while those of the Soviet Union have increased dramatically, both in numbers and in effectiveness. At a special meeting of foreign and defence ministers in Brussels on December 12, 1979, NATO decided to counter the massive deployment of new Soviet SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles and *Backfire* supersonic bombers with a plan to produce and deploy in Europe, beginning in late 1983, a number of new ballistic and cruise missiles. At the same time, NATO ministers decided that the Soviet Union should be invited to engage in arms control negotiations seeking agreed upon limits on the numbers of these weapons on both sides.

This offer to negotiate was immediately communicated to the Soviet Union which, however, refused, saying that the NATO decision to proceed with its TNF modernization program had "destroyed the basis" for negotiations. Not until July, following a visit to Moscow by West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, did Moscow abandon this position and agree to "preliminary discussions". These were held between the United States and the Soviet Union in Geneva in October and November. It was agreed to resume the discussions at a later date, following the US presidential changeover.