

CANADA'S UNIQUE GIFT

When asked if there is any unique gift that Canada can offer to Central and Eastern European countries in their quest for greater political and economic freedoms, Paul Frazer answers without hesitation: "its people." Since being appointed last September as Executive Director of Canada's Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe, Frazer says that he has been reminded often of assets which many Canadians forget they possess: "One of our particular and very special contributions is evident to us every day—and because of that, we probably don't notice it as readily; and that is the human resource element.

"Such a historical linkage brings to bear linguistic and cultural strengths, family ties and enhanced inside knowledge, as well as a base for the networking of business connections."

Hon. John C. Crosbie

"We have been told by people in the European Commission Office in Brussels and by interlocutors in Prague, Warsaw and Budapest that they are very impressed with the fact that there are readily-available, highly-qualified people in Canada, who not only can bring to a project the particular skill of their profession and background, but also a sensitivity and an understanding of the culture."

With about one in 10 Canadians tracing their origins to the region, Canadians also bring another skill to the task—languages. "Not only do many Canadians bring fluent capacity in English and French, but they also bring the language of the countries of their families' origin: whether it be Polish,

whether it be Czech or Slovak, whether it be Hungarian—and that is actually a special commodity that we have."

A career diplomat, Frazer previously served in the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw and in Ottawa in the Eastern European Division of External Affairs and International Trade Canada. More recently, he was the Official Spokesman and Press Secretary to Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark.

As head of the Task Force, Frazer's job is to administer a \$40 million program of public and private sector initiatives aimed at promoting democracy and free market economies in Central and Eastern Europe. Working in close co-operation with the governments in the region and Canadian diplomats on the ground, the Task Force assesses proposals and requests for assistance, leading to the funding of worthy projects.

Canada may not have the largest technical assistance program in dollar terms, Frazer says, but the Task Force's first year of operation brought very good results. Canadians, he says, have been successful in fostering the necessary mutual trust with host governments which are discovering that "Canadians are not only determined to be of some help but are, in fact, prepared to move quickly to follow up on proposals and decisions made." ■

New Projects in USSR on Hold

The Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe's new project activity with the Soviet Union was suspended in January due to the military crackdown in the Baltic States. Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, Joe Clark, strongly condemned what he called the "brutal and unwarranted use of military force" against the democratically-elected governments of Latvia and Lithuania. "We want to help the Soviet Union and its people through this difficult transition period," said Mr. Clark, "but much now depends on the continuation of Soviet reforms by that country's authorities."