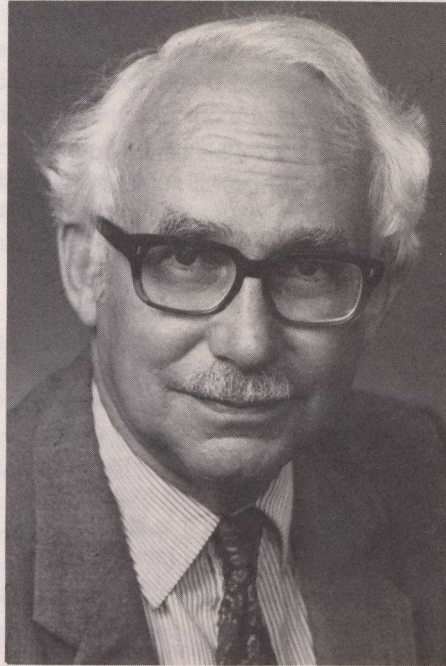




proposal made on February 14, 1985, by the East.

In his plenary statement presenting that Basic Provisions initiative over a year ago, the Distinguished Representative of the Soviet Union, Ambassador Mikhailov, placed great importance on the merits of setting aside the comprehensive approach and concentrating on a first-phase agreement. He claimed that the contents of that proposal would permit us speedily to achieve a first-phase agreement. He added that such an action, by demonstrating the readiness of both sides to move forward towards lowering the level of military confrontation, would undoubtedly help to create the necessary confidence and establish a favourable climate and ground for further joint efforts to improve the military-political situation.

While the West saw the need for substantial improvements in several features of those Basic Provisions, most notably in their minimalist verification provisions, it recalled the merits of its own 1979 first-phase proposal. After an in-depth review of these negotiations, the West concluded that a time-limited, first-phase approach did offer a possible way forward. In December 1985, the West thus tabled an initiative which not only accepted the framework embodied in the East's Basic Provisions but, in order to break the deadlock in these negotiations, took the exceptional step of setting aside its legitimate insistence on prior agreement on data. That, Mr. Chairman, according to earlier Eastern claims, was the ' Gordian knot ' in need of cutting, following which progress could at last be made in Vienna. Ambassador Mikhailov's closing invocation on February 14, 1985, urged the West to ' treat the new proposal of the Socialist countries in a most attentive and serious way and to give it a timely and constructive reply which would make it possible to reach the first tangible result in the negotiations in Vienna. ' This requirement was not only met but exceeded by the West's milestone initiative. In effect, the sides finally agreed on a common itinerary to reach a first tangible result.



Mr. Michael Shenstone, Head of the Canadian delegation to the MBFR talks.

The West still supports the common framework approach so earnestly advocated by the East over the past 15 months. We still consider it the most realistic and practical means of achieving an early first agreement for reductions and limitations on conventional armed forces in Central Europe. The next logical step is to complete the journey we mutually agreed to embark on. If and when we succeed in doing so and the resultant agreement is implemented to the satisfaction of all parties, then the more ambitious phase involving substantial reductions in military manpower to reach parity at lower levels in Central Europe would at last become an attainable goal. However, for the time being, we are at the stage where issues that still divide us must be aired, argued and hopefully reconciled in the search for the final breakthrough to a first-phase agreement.

One of the most important of these issues is the need for a system of verification that will instil sufficient confidence in all parties to this agreement that implementation and compliance occurs, and is seen to occur, in strict conformity with the obligations undertaken. The West has developed and fully explained

its concept of verification. The East has still to demonstrate how its meagre verification measures can satisfy the high standards of effectiveness and reliability required of a viable verification regime. The West was disappointed with the East's failure in the last Round to fulfil the expectations created by the proclamations of its leaders and with its apparent backtracking on certain key points. Nevertheless, we take the optimistic view that such positions may have been developed in haste and may yet be modified to make a positive contribution to our joint efforts here.

During a speech in East Berlin on April 18, 1986, General Secretary Gorbachev outlined some ideas which alluded to untying a supposed knot in our Vienna negotiations, but which seemed to cut across the work of several arms control fora. How these ideas will affect our talks in Vienna, if at all, is not clear at present. But without making any further comment on the implications of the April 18 statement as a whole, we note that the view that European security is a concept going beyond Central Europe is consistent with a long-held NATO position — often expressed at this table — that certain of the Associated Measures proposed by the West should apply beyond Central Europe. We hope, therefore, that the East's resistance to these Associated Measures will now come to an end.

The West is always prepared to consider constructive suggestions to advance these negotiations. However, the West is not aware that our work on the first-phase agreement has exhausted its promising prospects. We hope, therefore, that time will not be wasted in extraneous discussions here which might delay or detract from the progress that these talks deserve, and that our common framework now facilitates....

To our view, the best means of demonstrating the sincerity of the East's commitment to substantial reductions and limitations on conventional armed forces in Central Europe and to reliable verification at every stage is by dealing positively and constructively with the serious Western proposal tabled here in December...."