

The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe

One of Canada's primary foreign policy goals of the past year has been to contribute to easing East-West tensions by promoting a broader and more stable relationship with the Soviet Union and East European countries through the development of greater political confidence and common interests. This objective was primarily pursued by an increased number of ministerial visits and official consultations in both directions, both in order to understand each other's positions better and to expand co-operation, notably in the area of trade.

The Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of state for External Affairs, took a leading role in keeping open the essential political dialogue with the Soviet Union in the belief that this could contribute to East-West stability. During an official visit to the Soviet Union in April 1985 he met with Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and other Soviet national and regional leaders. This visit was followed by one to Canada by Politburo member and Premier of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic V. Vorotnikov in May 1985, and a meeting between the Secretary of State for External Affairs and the new Soviet Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, in August 1985.

The Canadian government also maintained contacts with East European countries through high-level visits. In April 1985, President Ceausescu of the Socialist Republic of Romania visited Canada, as did Deputy Prime Minister Marjai of the People's Republic of Hungary in October 1985 and Zivorad Kovacevic, member of the Executive Council of Yugoslavia. The Honourable Monique Vézina, Minister for External Relations, visited the People's Republic of Bulgaria in October 1985, and in March 1986, the Honourable Jake Epp, Minister of National Health and Welfare, paid an official visit to the People's Republic of Poland.

Canadian exports to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe declined by 31 per cent in 1985 to \$1.9 billion. A good part of this decline is due to weakened grain prices. The Soviet Union remained Canada's largest grain customer, accounting for one-third of Canada's grain exports. Imports from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe declined by a little over two per cent to \$296 million. In spite of the overall decrease in trade, Canada's merchandise trade surplus with the region still remains impressively high at \$1.6 billion.

The Department continued to participate in major trade fairs in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Romania, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The number of Canadian business representatives present at the fairs increased as compared to previous years.

Trade consultations are held on a regular basis with all the countries of Eastern Europe except Yugoslavia, where trade is not a state monopoly. Such consultations were held with Bulgaria in April, with the Soviet Union (at the ministerial level) in June and with the German Democratic Republic in November. In addition to regular consultations, high-level reviews of bilateral trade relations took place during high-level visits from Romania, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

During the past year, interest revived in renewing the General Agreement on Exchanges in education, Science and Culture with the Soviet Union. Co-operation with the Soviet Union was maintained in the 1984 Arctic Exchanges Agreement. In addition, a number of privately arranged sports, cultural and academic visits continued to take place.

Public affairs and cultural activities with countries of Eastern Europe remained modest during a period of fiscal restraint. Negotiations on renewing an exchange of notes on education and cultural relations with Hungary and Yugoslavia reached an advanced, if inconclusive stage. With the assistance of the Department of External Affairs, a film, TV and video co-production agreement was successfully negotiated between the Department of Communications and these countries.

Family reunification was again a special concern. The Department used every opportunity, both in bilateral consultation with, and in the course of official visits to and from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, to raise the issues of the reunion of families and human rights in general. Official representations were made during 1985-86 in support of approximately 250 persons in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe seeking to join close relatives in Canada. In addition to these numbers, a total of 2 155 people came to Canada from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

Perhaps the best indicator of the improving climate in Canada's relations with these countries was shown in their reaction to Expo 86. The Soviet Union built the largest pavilion at the fair, and seized on the opportunity to bring the world-famous Kirov Ballet for its first North American tour in 25 years. Construction of the Czech, Yugoslav, Hungarian and Romanian pavilions was proceeding apace at the end of the period under review. Also noteworthy was the "Precious Legacy" exhibition in Montreal, Toronto, and Calgary featuring artifacts from the Jewish Museum of Prague.

In the multilateral forums, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) held four meetings in which Canada was deeply involved. They are described below.

- Canada played an active role in the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe which began in January 1984.
- Canada hosted the CSCE Meeting of Experts on Human Rights in Ottawa from May 7 to June 17, 1985, which provided a frank and thorough exchange on the implementation of the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act and the The Madrid Concluding Document. While the meeting ended without a concluding document, Western and neutral countries made clear their insistence that human rights provisions should be observed and strengthened in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.
- From July 30 to August 1, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, participated in ceremonies in Helsinki commemorating the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Final Act, and held consultations with several East European Foreign Ministers. He reiterated Canada's commitment to the CSCE as a positive factor in East-West relations, our determination to achieve progress in the military security, economic, and humanitarian areas, and our disappointment at the failure of certain countries to fully implement their undertakings under the Final Act.
- At the Cultural Forum, held in Budapest from October 15 to November 25, Canada's delegation included eight eminent cultural personalities. The Canadian delegation stressed that cultural creation, dissemination and co-operation