

In military terms, despite Mr. Gorbachev's very welcome initiatives to reduce the huge Soviet military machine, the West still must face formidable and ever-improving Soviet forces. Each year, the USSR spends somewhere between 15 and 20% of its GDP on defence.

So, as Canadians assess our own policy, as we pursue Canada's interests, including our desire for peace and our belief in freedom, we have to look at all the faces of the Soviet Union. Moreover - we have to remember our own geography and history. We are right next door to both the Superpowers, in the direct and inescapable path of any serious conflict. We are a symbol and defender of free societies, to the point that in this century, over 100,000 Canadians paid with their lives to oppose totalitarian ambitions in Europe. This latter point is one we must never forget. In Paris last Sunday, I began my speech to the Conference on Chemical Weapons with a reminder that Canadians were tragically among the first to suffer the painful illness and death caused by mustard gas attacks in the First World War.

One avenue which has been especially valuable for Canada in its pursuit of better East/West relations on a broad front is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), whose basic document is the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. Over the years we have been active in all aspects of the CSCE process -- promoting military security; economic cooperation; human rights -- because we believe that these are interrelated in promoting East/West security and stability.

Canada played a leading role in the Vienna Follow-Up meeting of the CSCE, in progress since November, 1986 and now approaching its conclusion. We have done our part to promote substantial improvements by some countries in their record of compliance to the Helsinki Declaration. We have worked patiently and persistently with the 34 other CSCE participating governments to secure a range of new commitments which will make the Vienna Concluding Document a milestone in East/West relations.

The Conference is in its final stages -- indeed, its conclusion could be days or hours away, although there are still a few problems being worked out. Without going into greater detail, I expect that the Vienna Concluding Document will record major progress in all areas covered by the CSCE process.