

3. AFTER THE COLD WAR: THE BELLE OF THE BALL

The CSCE is becoming "the girl everyone wants to dance with."

- *Telegram from the Canadian Embassy in Bonn to Ottawa headquarters, May 22, 1990*

In 1989, the postwar Soviet empire began to disintegrate. After almost four decades of totalitarian rule, communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe collapsed fast and unpredictably. The Soviet Union itself, under Gorbachevian glasnost and perestroika, had abandoned its ideological aggressiveness and turned inward to concentrate on political and economic reform. Politicians and pundits waxed about the demise of the Cold War, the disappearance of the East-West fault-line, the prospect of a "new" Europe -- free, prosperous and at peace. More sober commentators murmured about an "old" Europe of national, ethnic and religious hatreds, and pointed to the East's inefficient industrial sectors, large foreign debts and undemocratic habits. Few doubted that European political and military relations were on the verge of a reordering as fundamental as those effected in 1919 and 1945.

Canada was cheered by and preoccupied with the changes, which had potentially profound implications for the nature and extent of Canadian involvement in Europe. In the fall of 1989, the Department of External Affairs initiated a review of Canada's policy towards the region, intended to determine the best way to ensure that Europe reformed itself in a way that was amenable to Canadian interests. These interests ranged across areas of trade and investment, science and technology, environment and culture. Above all, Canada's interest was in stability and peace. Offspring of Europe, Canada had shared both the profound benefits of Europe's political and social ideas and the tragic costs of Europe's wars. It was clear that the new regimes would need help to build democracy and implant the rule of law, to make the transition to a market economy, and to deal with unbottled ethnic tensions. It was also clear that the European security framework would have to be revised to accommodate the de facto end of the bloc system, and to encourage the transition of the USSR to being a stable partner in cooperation. What was seen as at stake was the "successful replacement of the bitter postwar order we have endured since 1945" and the prospect of "a Europe woven together by a web of interdependence which would make the calculation of war irrational."⁴

Already, Canadian officials were seeing possibilities for an enhanced CSCE role in European security. In late 1989 and early 1990, the Department of External Affairs CSCE Coordinator visited Washington and several European capitals, exploring CSCE questions. January 1990 saw the first draft of a paper on "The CSCE in a Changing World: Canada's Role." The paper raised ideas and themes that would be fine-tuned through the coming months as Canada considered how the CSCE could be taken advantage of and reshaped to help promote stability in Europe.

Canadian diplomats saw the CSCE as being well-suited to addressing the problems

⁴Statement 90/09, Notes for a Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, at McGill University Department of Political Science and Economics, Montreal, February 5, 1990.