

The answer to all these questions is surely no.

Now, this of course does not mean we slide into escapist dreams or flights of idealism divorced from reality.

We cannot forget, after all, that the Soviet military remains enormous, enjoying tremendous numerical advantages over our own forces in Europe.

Again, the obstacles Mikhail Gorbachev faces internally are major ones. His eventual success can not be taken for granted.

We must remain prudent, always careful to safeguard our interests and advance our values.

The Soviet Union has no tradition as do we of democratic institutions or individual liberties.

In any negotiations with the Soviets, we must bargain hard.

And we must, above all, continue to be guided by that combination of defence and dialogue which has served the NATO Alliance so well for 40 years, which helped create the incentive for Mr. Gorbachev's reforms.

But it is not a choice between "our" interest and "theirs"; between dialogue and silence; between their future and ours.

Canada and the West have a big stake in Mr. Gorbachev's success.

We must encourage his reforms. We must applaud his efforts, while asking for more. We must be patient. We must state our support for his domestic goals clearly and unequivocally. We must help the Soviet citizen develop that sense of self-confidence so central to the success of reform.

How does Canada fit in to all of this?

In one sense, we have no "special" interest. We are a country like others which seeks peace, strives for stability and searches for new avenues of cooperation. But we also have much that is special. We are the next-door neighbour to the Soviet Union, a Northern country, an Arctic nation. We too have a resource-based economy, and skill and experience in developing it. We share environmental concerns and problems. We are a multicultural society that works - and that has direct family connections to the East - one in ten Canadians are from Russian or Eastern European backgrounds. And we have much to offer a Soviet Union which seeks Western know-how and experience as it enters a new economic era.