

Strong support for arms control negotiations

Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark has stressed that as the fourth round of US-USSR nuclear arms talks begin in Geneva, Canada is determined to assist "the process of negotiation towards an equitable agreement". Speaking to the House of Commons on January 23, he said Canada would increase its efforts to encourage arms control progress by urging both countries to comply with existing arms control treaties, by developing practical solutions to verification problems and by supporting an improvement in East-West relations. Following are excerpts from his speech:

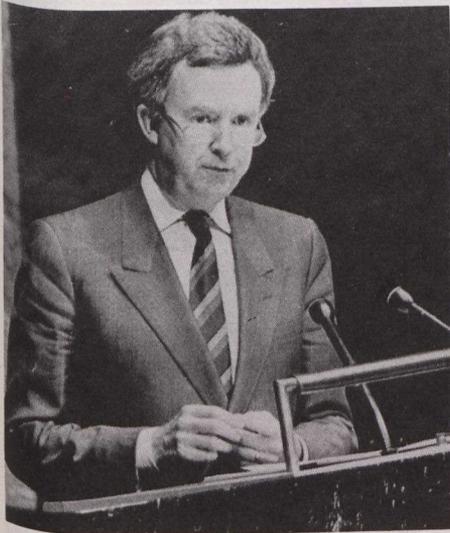
For Canadians, no duty is more challenging than to contribute constructively to peace among nations. In a world threatened by the spread of arms, we are one country who, decades ago, chose deliberately not to acquire nuclear weapons....

A year ago, in a statement in Parliament, I expressed the government's satisfaction at the agreement between the US and the Soviet Union to resume negotiations in Geneva....

Positive progress

We are encouraged by the signs of progress, in particular, the tabling last fall of detailed American and Soviet proposals which contained some important common features: a 50 per cent reduction of nuclear arsenals, limits on warheads as well as launchers, and sublimits on ICBM warheads. We hope that, in this International Year of Peace, the experienced negotiators of both sides will be able to enlarge significantly on this common ground. Agreement on an equitable formula for the radical reduction of nuclear forces and on the appropriate relationship between offensive and defensive strategies and systems will remain the key challenges.

We welcome the broad-ranging proposal



Canapress

Joe Clark stressed that agreement on arms control must be based on negotiated treaties in his address to the House of Commons and to the fortieth session of the General Assembly of the UN (above) last September.

issued by General Secretary Gorbachev and its reaffirmation of the Soviet Union's commitment to nuclear disarmament....

The Geneva summit and the decision to regularize this high-level contact improve the prospects for progress in arms control. Besides bringing leaders together, regular meetings build in an annual accounting of progress on arms control and encourage leaders to resolve issues which negotiators cannot.

Increased influence

Through the channels open to us, Canada will actively encourage the conduct of serious and constructive negotiations. The House should note the extraordinary degree to which the United States has informed and consulted with its allies since the Geneva process was resumed. The prime minister's personal meetings and conversations with President Reagan provide a continuing avenue of Canadian influence on the administration's positions on arms control.

In December, in Brussels, I convened a special meeting of Canadian arms control ambassadors to identify specific areas where Canada might contribute to practical progress. One instrument is to press within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization for more frequent and focused consultation on the state of the various arms control negotiations and their implications for Alliance policies.

We will not, however, be talking only amongst ourselves. This government is committed to promoting a more active and meaningful dialogue with the countries of the Eastern bloc. In September the prime minister wrote to General Secretary Gorbachev outlining Canadian views and priorities with respect to arms control and disarmament. Last month I sent a team of Canadian officials to Moscow for consultations on arms control with the top Soviet experts, Ambassadors Petrovsky and Karpov. Similar consultations are planned with other East European countries this year....

Specific contributions

This government's activity will be focused in three directions: encouraging compliance with existing treaties; developing verification

mechanisms; and building confidence between East and West.

To deviate from a policy of full compliance is to threaten the credibility, and hence the viability of arms control. Canada firmly supports the regime created by the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the existing Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) agreements on limiting strategic forces. Our stance towards strategic defence initiative research is rooted in the need to conform strictly with the provisions of the ABM Treaty. We will continue to urge the parties to these treaties to do nothing to undermine their integrity, but rather work to reinforce their status and authority.

Effective verification provisions can help ensure compliance with arms control treaties as well as facilitate their negotiation. Verification is an area where Canadian expertise and diplomacy come together. At the UN this fall, a Canadian-initiated resolution on verification was unanimously adopted. We are second to none in our activity to develop verification procedures and technology that meet the practical requirements of arms control agreements actually under negotiation or envisaged....

Consultations in Africa

Minister for External Relations Monique Vézina made official visits to Gabon, Senegal and Niger, January 7 to 17, to discuss international issues and Canada's political, economic and trade relations with each country.

She led the Canadian delegation to the third session of the Canada-Gabon Bilateral Commission, the third session of the Bilateral Commission in Senegal and the regular bilateral consultations on the co-operation program in Niger.

Consultations were also held in each country in preparation for the Francophone Summit, currently being held in Paris.

Mrs. Vézina visited a number of co-operation projects begun by the Canadian International Development Agency and met with groups of Canadian business leaders in each country. In Gabon, she participated in a cornerstone-laying ceremony for the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation building, which was designed and built by a Canadian firm. In Niger, she signed a general development co-operation agreement that establishes the main themes for Canadian involvement in the country.



Monique Vézina