

Policy

Chemical Weapons

Canada welcomed President Ronald Reagan's call upon signatories of the 1925 Geneva Protocol on chemical weapons, and other concerned states, to convene a conference to consider actions which might be taken to reverse the erosion of international prohibitions on the use of these weapons. External Affairs Minister Joe Clark noted that Canada was "profoundly disturbed by the recent use of chemical weapons in the Iran-Iraq war, and had repeatedly condemned such actions." The convening of an international conference to strengthen prohibition against chemical weapons use would be a positive move in strengthening the effectiveness of the Geneva Protocol. Mr. Clark expressed the hope that such an international conference might provide an impetus to broader negotiations on chemical weapons in the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Canada was actively participating with other nations in an effort to reach a comprehensive, global and verifiable ban on the production, possession and use of chemical weapons. The complete elimination of chemical weapons remained Canada's goal (External Affairs News Release, September 26).

"With an end in sight to the Iran-Iraq war, the United Nations should redouble its efforts to ban the chemical weapons which had been used, with horrifying results, in the conflict," urged the *Edmonton Journal* on August 9. It cautioned that to do nothing was to invite more chilling scenes — like the hundreds of dead villagers sprawled in the Kurdish village of Halabja this spring, after Iraq had unleashed poison gas. Iraq's use of chemical weapons against its own citizens and its Iranian foes was to be remembered as a shameful event in a terrible war, according to the *Ottawa Citizen* of August 30. But continued failure to negotiate an effective treaty to control such weapons was to compound these dreadful errors. The *Moncton Times-Transcript* wrote on August 23 that because of the development of nuclear weapons, especially those borne on intercontinental ballistic missiles, there had been a relative ignoring of the immense dangers to humankind posed by bacteriological and chemical weapons. *The Gazette* (Montreal) on September 11 urged all countries to step up efforts to conclude a treaty banning the production and storage of chemical weapons.

Human Rights

Bill C-147, an Act to establish the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, was passed by the House of Commons on September 13. The objects of the Centre were to initiate, encourage and support cooperation between Canada and other countries in the promotion, development and strengthening of institutions and programs that would give effect to the rights and freedoms enshrined in the *International Bill of Human Rights*. The world's worst tyrannies were apt to shun the Centre, according to the editorial in Montreal's *The Gazette* of August 18. But, it added, there was much that could be done in countries where a civilian government was struggling to consolidate itself and civilian institutions against challenges from a powerful military. "Of course, the Centre won't save the world. But it does stand to contribute something to making it a better place," concluded the editorial. The legislation received royal assent on September 30.

Peacekeeping

United Nations

Canadians felt "pride and pleasure," according to External Affairs Minister Joe Clark, at the decision of the Nobel Committee which awarded the its Peace Prize to the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces. Mr. Clark observed that this award would have a special meaning for more than 80,000 Canadian men and women who had served in the UN Peacekeeping contingents in the last three decades. This work had often been difficult, even dangerous, and seventy-eight Canadians had given their lives in this duty. "No country has been more steadfast or supportive in its commitment to UN Peacekeeping than Canada, and it is worth remembering that peacekeeping, as we know it today, was begun on a Canadian initiative more than thirty years ago," added Mr. Clark. Canada had participated in every UN peacekeeping action since that time, a record unsurpassed by any other UN Member (External Affairs News Release, September 29).