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PERSPECTIVES**

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NOTE TO READERS: Our pages are numbered sequentially from the start of the year to facilitate production of a cross-referenced index that will accompany December's issue.

Changing Relations with the USSR

After long and inexcusable delay by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's administration, this country's approach to the Soviet Union finally has begun to move with the times. Evidence of change is to be seen in the Canada-Soviet political declaration and the bevy of commercial, environmental and other agreements signed during the Prime Minister's visit to the USSR last November. Yet the change in our policy is itself sluggish and half-hearted and seems to be in real danger of grinding to a halt.

To the news media while still in Moscow and to the House of Commons on his return, the Prime Minister took pains to stress the continuing importance of Canada's contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's presence in Europe even as the Warsaw Pact was dissolving before our eyes.

And now, when West Germany has undertaken to cut its armed forces by 20% and as the defence ministers in Belgium and The Netherlands are proposing troops withdrawals from West Germany, doctrinaire forces within our own Department of National Defence (DND) continue to define the main threat to Canadian security in terms of attack by the Soviets.

Current Policy Relatively Static

Though the mix in Canada's policy toward the USSR under Mikhail Gorbachev certainly has altered of late, we continue to pursue a two-track policy of co-operation and deterrence that is not qualitatively different from our approach to the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev.

Nowhere is the guarded transition in Canada's policy toward the Soviets more evident than in the Arctic. New things are indeed happening there and we are part of them. But old attitudes are tending to live on as a wizened extension of our commitment to deter Soviet aggression.

Unbeknownst to most Canadians, efforts are under way to create new regional frameworks for Arctic scientific and environmental co-operation. For a couple of years now, the Arctic countries — Canada, Denmark/Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Soviet Union, Sweden and the United States — have been engaged in a difficult negotiation to produce an international Arctic Science Committee (IASC). The creation of such a body, the fundamental goal of which would be to protect the Arctic environment, has been the subject of separate talks among the Arctic Eight. These talks had their genesis in a Finnish initiative set out in January, 1989, but formal discussion itself actually did not begin in earnest until a meeting in Rovaniemi,

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