

**SERVING DEMOCRACY WORLDWIDE**

**T**HE Berlin Wall long stood as a symbol of the Cold War, of a divided Europe — indeed, of a divided world. Its destruction now symbolises a new era in which the contagion of democracy is spreading worldwide, overthrowing the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe, shaking the foundations of apartheid in South Africa, and bringing elected governments to South America, a continent long blighted by brutal military dictatorships. As Secretary of State for External Affairs Barbara McDougall told the United Nations General Assembly in September 1991. "The pace and direction of events of the past few months have, in general terms, augured well for a more secure and more equitable world order, and for the ultimate triumph of the law dedicated to the rule of law."

Support for this burgeoning of the rule of law and for democracy is a keystone of Canadian foreign policy. The continuing spread of democratic institutions is critical to the promotion of international peace, respect for human rights and a more just distribution of the planet's wealth. Canada encourages this process both bilaterally and multilaterally, through membership in such organizations as the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Organization of American States.

**Collapse of Communism**

The most dramatic change has occurred in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union with the sudden collapse of Communism. The dizzying pace of change in the East confronts the West with an historic opportunity and a

great responsibility. Canada has risen to this challenge by establishing a Task Force on Central and Eastern Europe to bring together public and private resources in support of the push toward democracy and private enterprise. Under the aegis of this body, Central and East European governments are helped to strengthen the democratic frame work of their countries and to move toward a market economy.

As a multiracial body that encompasses nations from all parts of the world, the Commonwealth is a natural arena for the promotion of democracy, even beyond the obvious example of South Africa. At their 1989 meeting, the Commonwealth heads of government agreed that the strengthening of democratic institutions was one area to which member governments could contribute, especially through the mounting of electoral observer missions. Accordingly, Canada has provided observers of elections in Malaysia and Bangladesh, and two prominent Canadians, former Ontario Premiers Frank Miller and David Peterson, have served as observers for the Guyanese registration process.

Democratic development can not be isolated from economic and social development. Believing that human resources are the most valuable means of bringing about change, Canada contributes to the areas of social and economic development in numerous ways. A Canadian initiative led to the establishment of a working group to enhance human rights. To promote educational advancement, the 1987 Commonwealth meeting in Vancouver ratified another

Canadian initiative by setting up the Commonwealth of Learning, making the best courses of institutions throughout the Commonwealth available to students in any member country. Canada also strongly supports a greater role for women in development issues by ensuring that they have a voice in policy and planning.

Long a staunch supporter of sanctions in South Africa, Canada is looking ahead to a post-apartheid era when the building of democratic institutions will become a paramount concern.

Although a relative newcomer to the Organization of American States (OAS), Canada has quickly realized its value as a force for democracy. In 1990, Canada proposed and received unanimous support for the creation of a Unit for the Promotion of Democracy within the OAS Secretariat. This Unit has monitored a number of elections, including Haiti's, with Canada organizing the OAS contribution.

The world is entering a new and exciting era. Barriers around the world are crashing down, and people long exploited and oppressed are demanding the benefits of democracy. Canada is responding to their plea by supporting the bolstering of democratic structures when they are weak or non-existent, and by supporting programmes that directly benefit the people themselves, helping them to ensure that there is no turning back from the path of democracy.

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**W**HEN Canadians were sent to the Suez region in 1956 to take part in the United Nations first peacekeeping force, UNEF I little did they know that they would represent the beginning of a long and distinguished Canadian tradition. Over the 35-year period, an estimated 85,000 Canadians have served with the UN peacekeeping forces and peacekeeping has become a source of national pride and a significant consideration in Canada's overall defence policy.

Peacekeeping has also made Canada a world leader in what promises to be a growth industry. In 1990, Canada had more troops involved in international peacekeeping than did any other country. With planning under way for new peacekeeping missions in the Western Sahara, Cambodia, El Salvador and, possibly, Yugoslavia, it is likely that many more Canadians will don the UN's emblematic blue berets in the coming years.

Canada is the only country that can claim to have participated in every mission to restore, monitor and maintain peace ever held under the auspices of the United Nations. It has also contributed to non-UN missions aimed at restoring peace in Indochina, Nigeria and, more recently, with a European Community led monitoring mission in Yugoslavia.

For a short period, it appeared that Canada's record had fallen by the wayside, because of its non-participation in the modest, 60-person first phase of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM). With the June 1991 announcement of Canada's contribution of military observers to be second phase, however, Canada's record was restored.

UNOGIL, UNIPOM, UNEF, UNGOMAP, UNIMOG, UNTEC, ONUC, UNTEA — the alphabet soup of UN missions has spanned the globe. Canadians have served in the Sinai, Zaire, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, West New Guinea and the Dominican Republic,

**SOLDIERS OF PEACE**

as well as one the Indian-Pakistani Border. In addition to UNAVEM, Canadians sporting the blue beret can still be found with the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) on the Golan Heights and with UN Truce Supervision Organisation in Palestine (UNTSO). They are long-standing members of UNFICYP the UN Force in Cyprus. Canadian military engineers form an essential part of UNIKOM, stationed in the demilitarized zone on the Iraq-Kuwait border.

Canadians were indispensable in designing and participating in ONUCA, the UN observer force in Central America.

The UN's presence in Namibia through the UN Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in 1989; in which Bangladesh also participated, has probably changed the face of UN peacekeeping operations — and subsequently Canada's involvement in such projects — forever. The UN Transition Assistance Group was far more than a military operation. In addition to observing the withdrawal of South African forces from Namibia and restricting warring forces to designated areas, UNTAG organized, conducted and monitored the first free democratic elections in the former South West Africa. The task required armed forces, civilian police, electoral supervisors, enumerators and scrutineers. About 250 Canadians participated in the 7000-person operation, which has become a model for others.

Canadians have already been assigned to technical missions that are laying the groundwork for a proposed UN operation in the Western Sahara. The UN Mission for the Referendum in the Western Sahara (MINURSO) will undertake the difficult task of enumerating the largely nomadic population in the sparsely populated desert region, in preparation

for an independence referendum.

Canadians are finding themselves playing important roles in what may become the largest peacekeeping and elections operation to date in Cambodia.

Why has Canada excelled at peacekeeping? The answer appears to be a combination of its willingness to take on the job, its acceptability to other countries and the expertise of

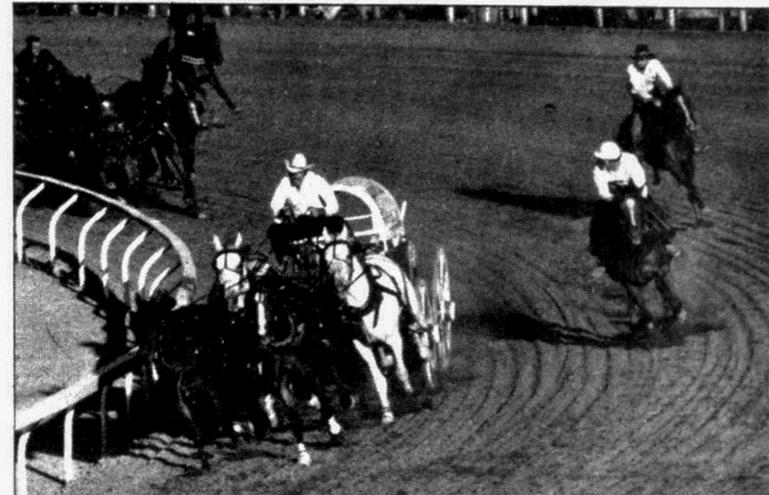
its armed forces.

The respect Canada has garnered as a leader in peacekeeping has, in turn, given its citizens pride and satisfaction. Public opinion polls consistently show that a vast majority of Canadians rate their country's UN peacekeeping efforts as important or very important. When UN peacekeeping operations were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, most Canadians — and especially those with personal experience — felt a well deserved sense of pride.

As Sir Brian Urquhart,

former UN Under-Secretary General for Special Political Affairs pointed out to an Ottawa audience, the cost of UN peacekeeping amounts to about 1 per cent of the world's annual arms sales. "The idea that peace is free and war is okay to be expensive is nonsense. Peace is a great deal cheaper and much more desirable than war. It's a bargain, peacekeeping, but it costs money."

*Adapted from Canada Reports, External Affairs and International Trade Canada, Vol IV, No 2, 1992.*



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