The Centre for International Governance Innovation

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Notes for Remarks in the House of Commons

By the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau

February 9th, 1984

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When the first atomic bomb exploded in a New Mexico desert in 1945, life itself changed, man gave himself the power of his own destruction.

Never again would children be free from fear of the bomb, never again would we parents be able to reassure them, nor to still our own anxieties.

A nuclear war would make no distinction between the sides of this house on which we find ourselves, between right and wrong, between rich or poor, between east or west, north or south.

Nuclear weapons exist. They probably always will. And they work, with horrible efficiency. They threaten the very future of our species. We have no choice but to manage that risk. Never again can we put the task out of our minds; nor trivialize it; nor make it routine.

Nor dare we lose heart.

Managing the threat of nuclear war is the primordial duty of both East and West. But Canadians are concerned that the superpowers may have become diverted from this elemental responsibility; that they may be too caught up in the ideological competition, in endless measurements of parity, in the trials of strength and of will. Canadians also know it would be foolhardy to expect that animosity between East and West will somehow disappear this side of the point of no return.

The experts would have us believe that the issues of nuclear war have become too complex for all but themselves. We are asked to entrust our fate to a handful of high priests of nuclear strategy, and to the scientists who have taken us from atom bombs to thermonuclear warheads, from missiles with one warhead to missiles with ten and more, from weapons that deter to weapons that threaten the existence of us all.

Canadians, and people everywhere, do not accept that proposition. They believe their security has been diminished, not enhanced, by a generation of work spent on perfecting the theories and instruments of human annihilation.

But technological push too often finds a sympathetic political pull. It is leaders who decide on defence budgets and research budgets. It is leaders who must direct; it is leaders who must assert their will for peace or science will devise ever more lethal weapons systems.

Canadian security is at stake; and Canada has earned the right to be heard, in peacetime and in war. Thousands of Canadians fought and died in two world wars that Canada had no hand in starting. We helped to shape the post-war world — at Bretton Woods where the World Bank was launched; and at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco, where the United Nations was born.

We advocated universal membership in the international community — when it was not always popular to do so. As Prime Minister Diefenbaker demonstrated with respect o Cuba, as Prime Ministers St. Laurent and Pearson demonstrated in helping newly independent states gain admission to the UN, and as my government demonstrated in recognizing the Peoples' Republic of China and its right to a seat on the UN Security Council.

Canada emerged from World War II as one of the very few nations with both technology and resources to build nuclear weapons. But we had seen the terrible nature of these weapons and their work. Successive governments, therefore, renounced this nuclear option, and applied Canadian skills to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In place of a National Nuclear Force, we joined with others in Systems of Collective Security — in the UN, in NATO and in NORAD.

Canada is a steadfast member of each of these organizations. In the UN, we took the lead in peacemaking and peacekeeping in the Middle East, Asia and Africa. In NATO, Canada is one of the few countries to maintain alliance forces permanently outside its borders. In NORAD, we contribute an element of priceless value: the airspace above our vast land. The United States can design its own defences knowing that 4,000 kilometres north of them, the land is occupied by a stable ally.

We take our commitments seriously. We have replaced our Maritime Patrol Planes with the most advanced aircraft of their kind in the world. We have equipped our armoured units with the high-performance Leopard Tank. We are phasing in sophisticated tactical and interceptor aircraft. We have launched a program to acquire new frigates. All of this is the most modern equipment available. All of it tasked to defence purposes.

We decided in 1969 that it was no longer appropriate for the Canadian Armed Forces to be equipped with nuclear weapons. We announced our intention to phase these systems out in a manner fully consistent with our commitments to our allies and as quickly as equipment replacement permitted. By 1970, we had divested ourselves of the surface-to-surface Honest John Rockets in Europe. By 1972, we had completed the conversion of Canadian Aircraft in Europe from a nuclear strike to a conventional attack role.

Also by 1972, the Bomarc Ground to Air Missiles based in Canada had been returned to the USA. We subsequently decided to replace the nuclear equipped Canada-based CF-101S by state-of-the-art CF-18 interceptors. Those CF-18S will carry out our Air Defence role more effectively with conventional armaments than the CF-101 could do with nuclear weaponry. This means that later this year we shall have rid ourselves of the last vestiges of nuclear weapons.

We have done more than look to our defences. We have addressed the causes of insecurity and instability, particularly in the Third World. East-West and North-South are the four points of the political compass of our modern age. The problems of the South cannot be solved in the absence of progress on global security. Massive military expenditures are distorting economic policies and diverting resources away from global economic development. This in turn is worsening Third World instabilities that ensnare East and West and add to the insecurity of us all.

Canadians therefore have earned the right to speak. They are telling us, the Members of this House, as people everywhere are telling their own leaders, that the danger is too near. They want their leaders to act, to accept their political responsibility, to work to reduce the nuclear threat.

Last Fall I spoke of an ominous rhythm of crisis. I drew attention to the confluence of three potentially disastrous trends — the resort to force to settle disputes, the risk of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the worsening staff of East-West relations. I decided to practice what all seven leaders of the industrialized democracies had proclaimed last summer at Williamsburg: “To devote our full political resources to reducing the threat of war”.

I decided to use Canada's influence to call international attention to the danger, to try to inject high-level political energy into East-West relations, to turn the trend line of crisis, to work at the crossroads of common interest between the two sides.

I proposed that the megaphones be put away, that an armistice be declared in the war of ideology and recrimination that an end be made to Manichaeism on both sides; that we exercise leadership, and apply statecraft, in East-West relations — the most important strategic relationship that we have.

Since last fall I have taken that message to Paris, The Hague, Brussels and Rome; to the Vatican, to Bonn, to London and to Zurich. I presented it in Tokyo, and to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in New Delhi. To Peking, to Washington, and to the United Nations, I met with leaders in Prague, East Berlin and Bucharest, to ensure that our message was heard in the highest councils of the Warsaw Pact.

At each step along the way, my message was straightforward. Canada was not looking for a seat at the superpower table. But our lives and our future were on that table, as were those of the nine-tenths of the world's population living outside the USA and the USSR. We all had a right and a responsibility to involves ourselves, to press those at the table to remember their own humanity.

We proposed giving political impetus to the Stockholm Conference on measures to build confidence and reduce the risk of war in Europe. As many other East-West contacts collapsed, that conference took on importance even beyond its status as the only forum serving the Helsinki process of Detente.

We insisted that both sides invest political effort to stimulate the talks in Vienna on mutual and balanced force reductions. These MBFR talks are the key to achieving parity of conventional forces in Central Europe and to raising the nuclear threshold, thereby diminishing reliance on early first use of nuclear weapons.

We proposed meetings as soon as possible of the Five Nuclear Powers to that a forum might be established wherein to negotiate global limits and, eventually, reductions to their nuclear arsenals.

We urged action to reinforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Preventing the spread of nuclear weapons is in the interest of superpower, middle-power and micro-state alike. And yet, as long as the Five Nuclear Powers show little sign of initiating the reductions called for in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, we run the grave risk of seeing nuclear weapons spread to new regions and to old rivalries.

Above all, at each step along the way I urged political leaders to commit themselves personally; to put peace at the top of their agenda; to exercise the political leadership the current dangerous situation demands — to restart the dialogue between East and West.

I told President Reagan that the signals he was sending of American strength were being received in the East — but that a message of peace was not getting through. I told leaders in Eastern Europe that the harsh rhetoric of their declarations had guaranteed rejections of the Warsaw Pact's more positive proposals.

Signs of Progress:

Misperceptions and mistrust on both sides run deep, but I believe we are beginning to see signs of progress.

In GOA, in November, forty-two Commonwealth leaders strongly endorsed my efforts to restore East-West political dialogue and to promote negotiations among the nuclear weapons states.

In Brussels, in December, NATO Foreign Ministers reached a consensus on several points I had argued strenuously during the past few years. They made a declaration which offered the East a balanced and constructive relationship. They made it clear that the West did not aspire to strategic superiority, and that the West respected the Soviet Union's legitimate security interests.

In accordance with our initiative, East and West have now agreed to resume the MBFR talks in Vienna on March 16. And they have agreed that Foreign Ministers should play a more active role in stimulating progress at those talks.

At the insistence, NATO Foreign Ministers participated early last month in the opening of the Stockholm Conference, to underline the importance they attached to high-level political dialogue. The Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers responded to this Western move and also went to Stockholm. Of special significance was the presence in Stockholm of US Secretary of State Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, who met for over five hours. Both also met with my colleague the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs.

Broad political contact was thus re-established between the countries of East and West for the first time since the acrimonious conclusion of the Madrid Conference last September, in the shadow of the Korean Airliner tragedy.

Even Prime Minister Thatcher has taken steps to improve contacts between East and West. Her visit to Budapest last week is a further signal of momentum in East-West dialogue — a determination to seek out areas of understanding between members of opposing alliances, and to promote a reassuring clarity about intentions.

In contrast to earlier statements, President Reagan twice last month signaled a constructive tone in American policy towards the USSR. The response from Moscow has been mixed — elements of tough rhetoric together with signs of a cautious readiness to re-open lines of communication.

I have, Mr. Speaker, just returned from consultations with the leaders of Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and Romania. Those countries represent a Middle-European geography, and a middle-power psychology, with long experience of East-West tensions.

Obviously they are closely allied to the Soviet Union. But their leadership, their influence, and their identity are, in present circumstances, significant. I found, for example, a very positive response to my suggestion that the middle powers of each alliance could play a constructive part in reviving habits of consultation at the highest levels of East-West politics.

I gave them our Western perspective on the decline of Detente, and on the importance of its renewal, and I listened to their own. We talked about the mixture of signals between the East and West, and about the need to go beyond an improvement in rhetoric, towards acts and gestures to restore confidence and reduce tensions.

I return with several conclusions from my talks in Eastern Europe:

1. First, I was struck by the contrast between the cordial, reasonable, and non-ideological private talks, and the occasional blast of Warsaw Pact fundamentalism to which we were subjected in public. I believe this disparity underlines the importance of personal contact and private dialogue. Without that dialogue, both sides risk remaining prisoners of their own polemic.
2. Second, because we were able in our private talks to strip away much of the invective surrounding key issues, I believe we were able to begin a process of exposing areas of common interest. That process will take time, but I dare hope that a new level of maturity in East-West relations is within our grasp.
3. Third, if we are to reach that level of maturity, we shall have to grapple with difficult problems of misperception on both side's — blind spots and distortions, subjective errors of analysis or of judgment.

Few of my interlocutors, for example, seemed genuinely able to perceive, let alone concede, the gravity of the thread posed to Western countries by the deployment of Soviet SS-20's, and for our part, I wondered whether we in the West had not significantly underestimated the full impact on the East of the combination of INF deployment with the harsh rhetoric or recent years.

It will be uphill work to gain a more accurate perception of each other, and to gauge more accurately the consequences of our various words and deeds. INF deployment must continue — and negotiations must be resumed. But only the "Third Rail" of political confidence and communication can ensure an early and constructive outcome.

In reflecting on these conclusions, and on the substance of my talks in Eastern and Western capitals alike, it is clear to me that areas of common interest are beginning to emerge.

Let me suggest ten principles of a common bond between East and West:

1. Both sides agree that a nuclear war cannot be won.
2. Both sides agree that a nuclear war must never be fought.
3. Both sides wish to be free of the risk of accidental war or of surprise attack.
4. Both sides recognize the dangers inherent in destabilizing weapons.
5. Both sides understand the need for improved techniques of crisis management.
6. Both sides are conscious of the awesome consequences of being the first to use force against the other.
7. Both sides have an interest in increasing security while reducing the cost.
8. Both sides have an interest in avoiding the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries.
9. Both sides have come to a guarded recognition of each other's legitimate security interests.
10. Both sides realize that their security strategies cannot be based on the assumed political or economical collapse of the other side.

As Decalogue's go, this may seem modest, but I wonder, in this period when there are positive signs of emergence from a time of crisis, whether there is not sound purpose in going back to the basics. Beginning again, with a commitment to principles which can be shared or finding a place to start — surveying a little common ground on which to stand.

Therefore, we intend to draw on theses ten principles, to develop elements of a common purpose among the leaders of the East and West.

I shall be writing to President Reagan and to President Andropov, to leaders in both alliances, and to other statesmen, to propose that these are principles upon which both sides can build. Because there are points of agreement as well as disagreement, there is a way around the impasse of recent months. There are signs of promise and I believe that the trend-line of crisis has turned.

As we look back on our work over the past four months, and look to the months ahead, I am encouraged that we are beginning to see results. We sought to catalyze a dialogue between East and West, and that is happening. We sought to persuade both sides to turn down their rhetoric, and that has begun to happen.

I sought to associate myself with like-minded leaders in several quarters of the world. Many of them have begun, or continued to make their own contribution to a reduction of tensions, to put forward their own proposals for arms control. My colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs and I have pursued the Canadian initiative in multilateral institutions, in bilateral relations, at special conferences, and in dialogue with groups and individuals.

The Tasks Ahead:

We have injected political energy into East-West relations. But political energy is not, by itself, enough. It must be nourished by imagination, fortified by persistence, and confirmed by action. Imagination to find new ideas, which break old deadlocks and address emerging dangers, persistence to negotiate new agreements and to meet the challenge of technology. Action in the form even of small steps as evidence of good faith, action on specific tasks such as developing the means to verify arms control agreements, or in regularly scheduled consultations between East and West.

In the months ahead Canada will build on the progress so far achieved, to ensure that our ideas are further developed and implemented. We have no monopoly overnight. What counts is that some, though by no means all, of the key East-West indicators show that their downward course has been arrested.

My own personal contribution, though necessarily less intensive than in recent months, will definitely continue. I intend to go to Moscow, wherever circumstances permit. Our initiative will also be taken forward by my Cabinet colleagues, by our Ambassadors abroad and by all Canadians who share our purposes.

Canada will play its part in the councils of the West, in bilateral talks, at the multilateral meetings and conferences, in contacts with the Soviet Union and its allies.

We shall work vigorously for progress in the Stockholm Conference and the MBFR talks. If these talks bog down, Canada will endeavor to ensure that political leaders again take a personal hand in energizing them. Once the MBFR negotiations resume in March, it will be imperative that NATO respond to the proposal made last summer by the Warsaw Pact.

Following further consultations with our NATO allies, we shall, in the course of the current session of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament, circulate three proposals to gear down the momentum of new technology. We will thus give additional substance to the strategy of suffocation which I put forward in 1978.

There proposals are:

1. A ban on high-altitude, anti-satellite systems.
2. Restrictions on the mobility of ICBMS.
3. Improvements in the verifiability of future strategic weapons.

In the months leading up to next year's review of the Treaty, we shall continue to press both sides to keep the NPT bargain. For security is indivisible. If countries which do not now have nuclear weapons acquire them, then everyone's security will be diminished.

The basis of the NPT bargain was that the Nuclear Powers would reduce their armaments in return for the non-nuclear powers not building their own, and that both would cooperate in sharing the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Thus the current nuclear weapons state bears an immense responsibility in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons.

Consequently, we must also continue to press our proposal for a conference of the five nuclear weapons states. It is a concept whose logic is compelling. Those Five Nuclear Powers are, at the same time, the permanent members of the Security Council. They have responsibilities as well as vetoes. That is why I asked the UN Secretary General, Mr. Perex de Cuellar, to explore and to promote confidential meetings of their representatives in New York. In my talks with Premier Zhao in January, I found that the Chinese had, since my visit to Peking, begun to express a readiness to consider such contacts in New York without the pre-conditions they had raised before.

The idea will take hold slowly, to be sure, as new ideas do. But I believe that it will take hold. For example: accident, miscalculation, crisis, systems failure — these are nuclear perils which all of the five powers must cope with. And which they have the responsibility to manage cooperatively. I suggest, therefore, than an early focus of Five-Power consultations should be crisis management; particularly the handling of nuclear weapons incidents, and the improvement of crisis communications.

Among the five nuclear weapons states, the two super-powers have by far the largest arsenals. They bear a corresponding responsibility to apply the same genius to reducing their arms as they did to developing them. They must not let their views of each other's morality and legitimacy prevents an early resumption of arms control talks. It is vital that they resume negotiations on limiting and reducing intermediate range and strategic nuclear weapons.

This past decade the superpowers have not ratified a single significant arms control agreement. In the preceding decade they had ratified a dozen. Gestures are needed to lift the clouds of suspicion. A useful step would be for both sides to ratify an agreement which they observe already: The Threshold Test Ban Treaty.

I have been giving considerable attention so far to Five-Power relationships, to the bilateral environment of the super-powers, to multilateral talks and conferences. Much of our own contribution to this work is enhanced by the consultative process open to us in NATO. NATO is a significant forum for Canada whether in terms of national policy, of collective security, or of basic approaches to East-West relations.

When NATO was formed in 1949, Canada insisted that it be a political alliance, as well as a military one. And Canada continues on that basis loyally to maintain our long-standing commitment to NATO and to its policies.

But all institutions tend, by their very nature, towards inertia unless their members give them energy and a renewed sense of direction. Thus I was gratified that NATO Ministers decided, at their December meeting in Brussels, to commission a full review of the steps NATO can take to improve East-West relations. Canada has been urging such an approach at successive NATO Summits.

The last such review, in 1967, took place at the initiative of Pierre Harmel, Foreign Minister of Belgium. Then, as now, there was a sense that things ought to change. There was a need for the Alliance to have a vision of the future, and a political strategy to achieve it. The document which resulted, known as "The Future Tasks of the Alliance", was a landmark in NATO thinking. It came to terms, as in this period we must come to terms, with the need for a broad policy which governs, and gives purpose to, our military security.

The Harmel report's most profound conclusions were:

1. That military security and a policy of détente are not contradictory but complementary.
2. That work towards a balanced reduction of military forces should be intensified, as well as efforts to overcome instability and insecurity.
3. That the world had changed since the formation of NATO in 1949 and that there was a need to look ahead — to gain sightlines on the future and to work along with them.
4. And that each member of the Alliance had a contribution to make, not in subordination to, but in consultation with, the other members of the Alliance.

Despite frequent setbacks, the results of that policy are impressive, especially when viewed from today's perspective: The Inter-German settlements of the late sixties; the bilateral promotion of ties with the USSR by many western countries, including my own visit in 1971; elements of rapprochement in the superpower relationship — and the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.

We need to approach the coming period with the same spirit of enquiry, the same creative diplomacy, the same forward-looking vision.

The world has changed since 1967. We sense the shifts of power and psychology. East-West relations are far more complex than they were 17 years ago. There are competing trends of autarky, interaction, and interdependence, unforeseeable at that time.

It is essential that this new review chart a course for the Alliance to the end of this century. Canada will make its own contribution to the work, and abide by the results. I congratulate the current Belgian Foreign Minister, Leo Tindemans, for his part in launching the review. I welcome the incoming Secretary General, Lord Carrington — a man whose own ideas on East-West relations will inspire us with creativity and guide us with common-sense.

NATO is an alliance of democracies. Open discussion and independent action are as important for us as they were for Harmel. An alliance which fails to defend democracy in its councils will surely fail in its defence of democracy in the field. NATO Summit meetings have a particular importance, and should be the senior level of responsible alliance leadership and authentic debate. Prime Minister Thatcher and I discussed this point during her visit here last September.

In my remarks after dinner in Toronto I suggested that:

"…Canadians look upon NATO as the cornerstone of our defence policy. We do not wish to be silent partners, however. It is a political alliance, after all, and politicians like to discuss and even argue the issues. If we disagree from time to time, and expend great effort in trying to resolve our differences, that is not a sign of weakness in the alliance, but a sign of the strength which pervades a free association of independent countries"

Just as NATO's last policy framework emerged from the intellectual ferment and military turbulence of the 1960's, so should the next review take into account, if only as background, the full range of ideas now current about international security and the effects of nuclear arms. Many of these ideas are uncomfortable, incompatible, and awkward to entertain, but they are there, and no conspiracy of silence will make them go away.

Neither the alliance, nor its member democracies, are built on blind faith. National support for defence policies — and for defence expenditures — cannot be sustained by political or strategic liturgy alone. Bridging the gap between accepted wisdom and public anxiety surely means an open examination of the intellectual territory now occupied by many critics — critics of every persuasion, I might add — of contemporary concepts and doctrines.

I believe the new NATO review should reflect what I have been calling the need to bring statecraft and high politics to every level of the East-West system. And I suggest that the review will also have to cope, as Harmel did, with differences of perception among alliance members, with European and North American perspective, inconsistencies and ambiguities, with inchoate doubts and aspirations on each side of the Atlantic.

Canadians know the gravity of these issues. They know that Canada's power is limited and that we cannot force others to listen to us. But they also know that Canada has a role to play. That is why the government is creating a Defence and Arms Control Institute: to help Canada and Canadians more fully contribute to advancing the debate on peace and security, and to shaping that debate.

Throughout my own personal efforts to subject the science of war to the art of politics, I have been sustained by the support of many Canadians, and encouraged by their good wishes.

I thank them now, Mr. Speaker, and assure them, as well as this House, that the work we have started will continue. The Government of Canada is committed to these purposed and will carry them forward.

But we can carry them only so far without the collaboration of those who own and control nuclear weapons. Because it is the nuclear powers, and above all the superpowers who bear the greatest responsibility, let it be said of them in the future that this was the time when their political judgment controlled their technological genius, when their best interest served the common good. Let history survive, that it may judge them generously.

Let it be said of the other nations that they saw their own responsibility to work to reduce the threat of annihilation, to forego nuclear weapons, and to serve the purpose of a durable peace.

And let it be said of Canada, and of Canadians: That we saw the crisis; that we did act; that we took risks; that we were loyal to our friends and open with our adversaries; that we lived up to our ideals; and that we have done what we could to left the shadow of war.

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