

and that we have done what we could to lift the shadow of war." The prime minister's initiative was endorsed by opposition leader Brian Mulroney and NDP leader Ed Broadbent, striking testimony to the popular support Trudeau's efforts had received in Canada.

Though apparently concluded, the initiative had one last gasp remaining. Within days of Trudeau's address to parliament, Soviet leader Andropov finally expired and Trudeau jetted to Moscow for the funeral and, with luck, a meeting with Konstantin Chernenko, the new general secretary and a man whose health was little better than Andropov's had been. Trudeau got his thirty-five minutes, and used them to tell Chernenko that there was now a window of opportunity for accommodation between East and West. The dour Gromyko, present at the talks, responded bleakly that the West had to put something in the window if relations were to improve. Although the prime minister emerged from the meeting to claim that the initiative had received another jolt of political energy, there was room for doubt. Chernenko, desperately ill, could take only the most cautious steps in the direction of détente. And Robert Ford, long-time ambassador in Moscow, delivered a damning assessment two years later. Trudeau's "peace initiative was a total absurdity," Ford told the *Globe and Mail*, "and the Russians just laughed at it." Trudeau had no leverage in Washington and "no corresponding clout in Moscow ... he had no credit in the banks of either place."

The prime minister had one final crack at his allies when he attended the summit meeting in London in his last days in office and helped secure a communiqué that called for "security and the lowest possible level of forces." Trudeau had a shouting match with Reagan, telling the president "you have to do more" to promote détente. That led the usually unflappable (or comatose) president to pound the table and shout, "Damn it, Pierre, what the hell can I do to get those guys back to the table!" The source for that story, Patrick Gossage noted sourly, was "a well-detailed U.S. briefing."

PERHAPS FORD'S WAS THE PROPER ASSESSMENT OF THE WHOLE OF Trudeau's failed crusade or "world walkabout," as some sneered at it. Somehow, although he had been in power for sixteen years and a participant in NATO, Commonwealth, and summit meetings, Trudeau seemed not to understand how great power relations worked. Convinced of his intellectual powers and in no way immune from vanity, Trudeau naively continued to believe in the power of words and ideas, to believe that reason could dislodge the strenuous pursuit of self-interest by great powers, and to believe in his own star. He was and remained an adventurer in ideas, certain that he could persuade other leaders to join him in personal involvement in altering the nuclear threat. But for all his brilliance, he could not grasp why the Soviets and Americans were unwilling to take any risks for peace. Nor could he understand the American and Russian disinclination to allow smaller states to get in their way. In addition, as a believer in equidistance and a respecter of the superpowers' spheres of influence, Trudeau suffered from what his critics saw as an apparent unwillingness or inability to distinguish between the superpowers. Andropov's Russia was infinitely worse than the United States, even Reagan's United States, but Trudeau often seemed unable to make the distinction.

As important, Canada simply did not have the standing and power to

make such an ambitious effort. Canada was a small country, despite its citizens' puffed-up view of its power and influence. If Canadian foreign policy had had influence in the past, and it had, that was because of the unusual global situation that had followed the Second World War, not because of any fundamental shift in power. In other words, once the ravages of war had been repaired, Canada sank back to its normal place in the centre of the third rank. Only a near-Great Power could have had a chance of success in a peace initiative in the 1980s – and only if the preparations and plans had been carefully prepared well in advance.

That was not true of the Trudeau initiative. Inevitably, given Trudeau's sporadic interest in foreign policy, his unilateral initiative had been hurriedly cobbled together. Some of its ideas, notably the five-power meeting, were non-starters – "one of the worst ideas in arms control produced in modern times," one senior Canadian ambassador called it. And no effort had been made to build support for the initiative through patient low-level diplomatic discussions. Without that, success was virtually impossible. The result was that at times Trudeau seemed to be flying around the world, desperately trying to be received by national leaders. If he got in the door, he was listened to politely enough, but his message, satirized by one Canadian official as "let's love one another," left glazed eyes. On balance, this official concluded, the effect had been to diminish Trudeau – and his nation.

STILL, TRUDEAU HAD BEEN RIGHT TO TRY, AND NOT ONLY BECAUSE THE Canadian public overwhelmingly supported his efforts (and realistically expected little to come of them). The world was in crisis, and Soviet-American relations were so bad that war seemed to be a possibility. Someone had to speak out, and Trudeau took the risk. Whether or not the prime minister could claim the credit, the upward spiral of tension did ease. Leaders like Kohl in West Germany and Craxi in Italy began to press their allies towards accommodation, Thatcher in Britain eased off on her hard line, and Reagan became less interested in painting the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" than in beginning to talk to it. Trudeau had taken the risks, and he deserved some of the credit.

There was a definite irony here, however, most notably for those who seek consistency in their leaders' deeds and thinking. Trudeau at the end of his career had clearly resumed his assault on the entrenched positions of the Cold War, an effort he had earlier abandoned after his cuts in the Canadian NATO contingent in 1969. Moreover, he had turned himself into a helpful fixer. The prime minister who in 1968 had attacked Lester Pearson's style and role was, by 1983–4, trying to don the Pearsonian mantle – and probably with less success than the original. Pearson certainly would have realized that preparation and careful lower-level negotiation were essential first stages to any peace initiative. Mike Pearson had his vanity and his desire to shine on the world stage, to be sure, but he also knew the strengths, weaknesses, and potential of middle-power diplomacy. Despite sixteen years in office, Trudeau still did not recognize the limitations that living precariously in a superpowers' world placed on his country. □

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