



# Statements and Speeches

---

No. 83/8

## CANADA'S POSITION ON TESTING CRUISE MISSILES AND ON DISARMAMENT

An Open Letter to all Canadians by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau,  
Prime Minister, Ottawa, May 9, 1983

In recent months I have received a great number of letters and petitions protesting against the possible testing of cruise missiles in Canadian territory. Because it was physically impossible to send a personal reply to all those who had expressed their concerns to me, I gave a public response when I spoke last month at a dinner in honour of Vice-President George Bush.

Because this whole question continues to weigh heavily upon the consciences of those in government and the general public, I have now decided to address myself directly to Canadians through this open letter. My purpose is to explain the position of the Government of Canada on the testing of the cruise missile, and on the broader issue of disarmament.

By way of a preamble, let me point out that our freedom to discuss and argue issues is what gives our democracy its greatness and its strength; but that same freedom can also make us appear vulnerable in the face of Soviet totalitarianism.

In recent years, the Soviet Union has deployed hundreds of new *SS-20* missiles, each equipped with three nuclear warheads, capable of reaching all the great cities of western Europe. However, there has not been any significant outburst of public opposition, either inside or outside the USSR.

That the Soviet people have not protested against this action of their leaders surprises no one. What is surprising, however, is that those in the West who are opposed to new nuclear weapons have remained relatively silent about the installation of the *SS-20s*. In contrast, they are now taking to the streets to oppose the possible deployment of American *Pershing II* and cruise missiles to protect Europe against the Soviet nuclear threat.

What is particularly surprising in Canada is to see protesters opposing the possible testing of cruise missiles in Canadian territory, but not opposing the fact that similar missiles are already being tested in the Soviet Union, as was confirmed in December by General-Secretary Andropov.

Because people in the free world feel powerless to influence the leaders of the USSR, there is a great temptation to direct the whole force of their anguish and their protests against the only decision-makers who are sensitive to public opinion, namely

---