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Strategy of suffocation possible way to stop nuclear arms race

In an address to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament in New York, May 26, which was warmly applauded by delegates, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau said that the best way of arresting the dynamic of the nuclear arms race "may be by a strategy of suffocation, by depriving the arms race of the oxygen on which it feeds".

Mr. Trudeau, speaking to the UNGA for the first time, pointed out that "we have withdrawn from any nuclear role by Canada's Armed Forces in Europe and are now in the process of replacing with conventionally armed aircraft the nuclear-capable planes assigned to our forces in North America". Canada was thus, he declared, "not only the first country in the world with the capacity to produce nuclear weapons that chose not to do so, we are also the first nuclear armed country to have chosen to divest itself of nuclear weapons".

"We have not for more than a decade," he continued, "permitted Canadian uranium to be used for military purposes by any country. We are a country that maintains strict controls over exports of military equipment and does not export any to areas of tension or actual conflict. We are on the other hand, a major source of nuclear material, equipment and technology for peaceful purposes."

Arresting the arms race

The Prime Minister specified four measures which, he said, if combined, could be a more relevant, efficient and more promising approach to curbing the nuclear arms race:

"First, a comprehensive test ban to impede the further development of nuclear explosive devices. Such a ban is currently under negotiation. It has long been Canada's highest priority. I am pleased that the efforts of Canada's representatives and those of other countries stand a good chance of success during 1978. The computer can simulate testing conditions up

to a point. But there is no doubt in my mind that a total test ban will represent a real qualitative constraint on weapons development.

"Second, an agreement to stop the flight-testing of all new strategic delivery vehicles. This would complement the ban on the testing of warheads. I am satisfied that, in the present state of the art, such an agreement can be monitored, as it must be, by national technical means.

"Third, an agreement to prohibit all production of fissionable material for weapons purposes. The effect of this would be to set a finite limit on the availability of nuclear weapons material. Such an agreement would have to be backed up by an effective system of full-scope safeguards. It would have the great advantage of placing nuclear weapons states on a much more comparable basis with non-nuclear weapons states than they have thus far under the dispensations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"Fourth, an agreement to limit and then progressively to reduce military spending on new strategic nuclear weapons systems. This will require the development of the necessary openness in reporting, comparing and verifying such expenditures."

The Prime Minister continued:

"It is arguable that the credibility of such an agreement could be strengthened by placing the sums released from national accounts on international deposit, at least for an interim period, possibly in the form of special loans to international development institutions. Such an idea would be in line with conventional thinking about what should be done with at least some of the savings from disarmament. But I do not think it makes good sense to penalize countries that act responsibly by cutting back on armaments.

"I am much more attracted by the logic of the ideas advanced earlier this year by the President of France. I believe that, if penalties are to be exacted, they should be exacted from those who, by



Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Canada's first French Canadian prime minister, was elected leader of the Liberal party on June 7, 1887. He became prime minister in 1896, remaining in office until 1911.

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