

*The Address—Mr. McRae*

The Russians said their research indicated additional catastrophic consequences, including the creation of a global 'toxic smog', unchecked biological epidemics, a substantial depletion of the earth's oxygen supply and—

And this is terribly important.

—the probable shattering of the interconnecting web of systems that sustain life on the planet.

I believe this is what is in store for us if we do not make some very major changes. However, many people say that this will not happen, that the superpowers or political leaders will not allow it, and that while the danger is ever great it will not happen and we can be fairly sure that we will all survive. The superpowers and the political leaders would not want or cause this to happen; but there are a whole series of scenarios which one could write whereby this could happen, almost as if by accident.

● (1115)

I would like to look at a couple of scenarios because it is tremendously important when we are dealing with this issue to realize that the danger is great and that what the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and others are attempting to do is vital. I could refer to the situation in the Middle East, a crisis in Europe, in West Berlin or something of that nature. Perhaps a crisis in the Middle East is far more possible than we might have concluded in the past. If the situation reached the point where one side or the other decided that a nuclear war could happen in a very tense situation, possibly with some other kind of ongoing conventional warfare, if one side decided that the other side would strike first, there is always the danger of a pre-emptive strike of weapons which can destroy the enemy silo before one can fire its warhead. That is always a strong possibility in any major crisis.

Perhaps there is even a stronger possibility when we talk about weapons like the Pershing 2, the MX and to some extent the SS-20, although it is a much older weapon, that these weapons could evoke a launch on warning response. The Pershing 2 could be deployed in West Germany close to the border with East Germany. This particular weapon would take anywhere from six minutes to ten minutes to go from launch to target. The time is very, very short and crucial. There have been hundreds of occurrences where computers mistakenly have misread some danger or that a particular warhead was coming, but these have been corrected. Six, eight or ten minutes is not time enough for correction, so the Soviets have threatened—and the Americans have talked about the same thing—a response known as launch on warning. If a computer error occurs and a flock of geese is misinterpreted as a warhead, if one has only six minutes to ten minutes to check it out, then one launches on warning. That is what is going into play at this very moment as these weapons are being deployed.

There are various possibilities, although I have only mentioned one. We have a large number of our warheads in submarines at sea. In each submarine there are two people whose job it is to fire the weapons. They cannot be fired unless the two of them do it. Each has been sworn to kill the other if one should try to do it on his own. Suppose the two of them, having been at sea for three months or four months—and I

have been at sea for 30 days or 40 days and I know that one can become a little strange over that period of time—decided to fire the weapon, one Poseidon submarine has 160 warheads which can destroy 160 Soviet cities. With the Trident submarines coming along, they have something close to 200 warheads. God knows what the Russians have, but this is the kind of thing that can occur. I list these few examples only to show what could happen.

Then there is the example of a decapitation strike; that is, to destroy the enemy command post. A small war could become much larger because there would be no one to restrain those who would fire at will. Unless we get control of this situation, this nuclear exchange will occur with all of the consequences that I have mentioned.

● (1120)

There is a myth that the Soviets are much stronger than we are, and therefore we have to become stronger. All evidence, including the Scowcroft Commission, the Pentagon and other military people, shows that we are far stronger than the Russians. There is general parity, but in most areas our side, including the Americans, is well ahead. We are ahead where it counts. For example, the Russians have far more land based strategic ICBMs, 5,500 to 2,100, but we have 5,700 to 1,970 sea based missiles, and the sea based missiles cannot be destroyed in a first strike.

It would take me another half hour to develop this subject of weaponry. I would like to do so as it is tremendously important, but time does not permit. I repeat, there is general parity, but where it really counts, our side is better protected. The myth that we are about to be destroyed by the Russians, that we are much more vulnerable, is just that—a myth.

I wish to say a few words about what the Prime Minister is attempting to do. I admit that this will sound partisan but I do not know of any leader of a middle power who has the ability to do what he is attempting to do. I have spoken with high-ranking military people, not just Canadians, who have had conversations with him. I brought Paul Warnke the Chief SALT negotiator, to see him a year ago. Everyone is amazed at the knowledge which the Prime Minister has on this subject. It is a very complex subject and he is extremely knowledgeable. A very high level American general stated that he has not met any other political leader and only a few military people who have that knowledge.

This is exceedingly crucial when dealing with this matter. You have to know the situation. I do not think the Canadian people are aware of the degree to which the Prime Minister is so well informed. In the conversation with Mr. Warnke the Prime Minister said he was not as well versed as he should be. However, the two of them talked for an hour and a quarter as virtual experts. This is what we need.

The other factor is that the Prime Minister knows many people around the world. He has been a political leader longer than anyone else. It is important that he continue and complete the project.