

REVIEWS



Building Global Security Douglas Roche

Toronto: NC Press, 1989, 160 pp.,
\$14.95 paper

■ Douglas Roche's latest book marks his effort to rejoin the public policy debate and cast off the often troubling limitations imposed upon him during his tenure as Canada's Ambassador for Disarmament. As always, his views are visionary, and he re-enters the debate with positions that are difficult to disagree with.

This is an ambitious book, aiming to sketch no less than "a bold new plan – realistic and timely" to achieve "common security" in the face of the challenges facing humanity today. Roche provides a "tour d'horizon" of major challenges facing us at the close of the twentieth century, and singles out for special attention three issues: the continuing dangers of high levels of military spending, which translate into nuclear arms racing, reliance on nuclear deterrence, and the destructive (and expensive) arms trade with the Third World; the persistent economic, political and social underdevelopment in which the majority of the world's people live; and the accelerating environmental degradation at the global and local levels.

His grasp of the ground-level details and human costs of these problems is powerful. But although he is correct to highlight these issues, the link between the looming catastrophe, the change required to avoid it, and the specific action to take is weak. It would be unrealistic to expect "answers" to the challenges Roche poses, but readers are right to expect some analysis of the complex and contradictory choices facing

us from one of Canada's foremost speakers on these issues.

Perhaps the most poignant case is the conflict between developmental and environmental goals. Roche notes that "over the next two decades developing countries will need to create 700 million jobs – more jobs than currently exist in the entire industrialized world!" Yet three pages later he notes that a fifty percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions (the main source of which is the burning of fossil fuels) is needed to stop global warming. How the jobs created for these people (or the consumption demands their employment generates) will be consistent with reduced fossil fuel consumption is not addressed. Repeating the new mantra of "sustainable development" does not tell us how to avoid the terrible dilemma of this choice.

Roche also traces the outlines of recent positive and negative developments in the foreign policy positions of major states, including the Soviet Union, the United States, China, India and Canada. He singles out for praise President Gorbachev, and criticizes the conservative caution and lack of boldness that characterizes Canadian and American responses.

What is striking is the absence of an analysis of the deep historical, social and economic causes of the current crises he earlier identifies. These causes transcend the policy choices of individual states or leaders, and are rooted in the structure of the state system and nature of international economic forces. Solutions to problems of this magnitude are not to be found in the short-term machinations of the political process.

Roche seems to acknowledge this when he argues that the shift to a shared vision of "common security" will ultimately be based upon individual action and consciousness. Thus his conclusion

provides suggestions for actions Canadians can take, including: becoming environmentally responsible; lobbying politicians; joining local peace and environment group; planting trees; knitting quilts and eating ethnic foods. The reader is tempted to ask: "is this all?"

Most important, Roche's book must pass the test of advancing intelligent debate on the solutions to pressing world problems. If the goal is to increase public awareness of these issues as a basis for action, perhaps this book reaches it. But if the goal is to sketch a bold new plan to achieve common security, the book falls short.

– Keith Krause

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Radical Mandarin: **The Memoirs of Escott Reid** Escott Reid

Toronto: University of Toronto Press,
1989, 405 pp., \$ 35.00 cloth

■ Escott Reid, who served with distinction for a quarter of a century as one of Canada's foremost diplomats, has had a full life since the mid-1960s as an author (of five other books), advisor, and educator. Now eighty-five years of age, he recalls here not only his own past but also important parts of the history of Canada's coming of age in the tumultuous world politics of the middle third of the century. *Radical Mandarin* is part autobiography, part interpretative history, and part advice on policy. It is also an informative, enjoyable, and satisfying piece of work. He remarks at one point that,

to try in old age to discern the useful accomplishments of one's public life is a puzzling task. So many achievements which seemed important at the time look trivial or evanescent from a distance of decades. What does encourage me is that I played a part in molding six institutions: the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, the Department of External

Affairs, The International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations, the North Atlantic Alliance, and Glendon College.

Reid's experiences with these institutions figure prominently in his memoirs, and what he has to say – and he writes lucidly – is instructive and often evocative in capturing the political moods of his times.

Reid was frequently at or near the centres of decision-making. He met a lot of major political actors; he was concerned with formulating Canadian policy on matters of importance; he represented Canada abroad at times when major changes were underway (India in the mid-1950s, Germany in the early 1960s); and he was often at odds with government policy and dismayed by the behaviour of Washington. His life and career were wrapped up with many of the central themes of world politics between the late 1920s and the early 1960s; and while he does not claim to have been always present at their creation, he was certainly in a position to witness and sometimes influence the making of foreign policies and the unfolding of world events.

He struggled to promote humane policies; and now, in retrospect, he tries to understand more fully what he was a part of. His testimony is especially valuable for the years from the climax of World War Two to the height of the Korean War, years when his official duties were exceptionally diverse and frequently intense and demanding.

Many of Reid's reflections are pertinent to current history. In the 1950s, membership in the Commonwealth, he suggests, countered "some of the misleading simplicities of much of the cold war propaganda of the time" and