

Next month, a Canadian delegation will travel to Moscow for negotiations on an Arctic cooperation agreement. It is our hope that such an accord would provide for a broad range of exchanges in the scientific and environmental fields. We have also been encouraged by Mr. Gorbachev's publicly expressed concerns over air pollution in the Arctic. A concern which should open doors for multilateral discussions on the problem of Arctic haze - a subject of very real importance to us.

At Murmansk Mr. Gorbachev also made some security proposals, some new, some restatements of previous Soviet positions. They include: The creation of a nuclear-weapon free zone in Northwestern Europe; The limitation of military activity in certain waters; And the examination of a total ban on naval activity in mutually-agreed zones.

Secretary Gorbachev's northern security proposals have aroused considerable enthusiasm in some quarters. They have contributed to his portrayal as the man of peace, and Western leaders as obstacles to peace. Today I want to discuss the substance of his proposals and not their use as propaganda. But it is important, throughout this process, to judge what the Soviets are doing as well as what they are saying. What I am asking, in these cynical times, is that Westerners accord Mr. Gorbachev at least the same scepticism they apply to Western leaders who speak of peace.

Let me begin with some basic facts that come immediately to mind when the Soviet Union's northern security proposals are more carefully scrutinized.

The Soviet Union is the only Northern nation with an extensive and permanent deployment of nuclear weapons in the Arctic. In the North-western quadrant of the Soviet Union, the Kola Peninsula boasts a military arsenal that is enormous.

It includes about one quarter of the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear capacity -- its submarine launched missiles and strategic bombers. The Soviet Northern fleet, based there, includes 126 submarines, of which 90, incidentally, are nuclear-powered: 38 of those vessels carry in them 580 submarine launched ballistic missiles.

It also includes 12 cruisers, an aircraft carrier, 18 destroyers, 17 frigates and an array of smaller naval surface vessels.

Soviet land forces in the northwest Arctic region, more than 13 full divisions, would amount to two full armies when mobilized with a complement of 2,000 artillery pieces.