

found himself (according to one of the reporters present) "in the position of arguing that Canada is a small, rather frail country, while the Russians argued that Canada is a big, important one. . . . As Mr. Pearson pursued this line that Canada is a small nation, Molotov broke in. He said the Russians do not agree with the foreign minister. In the schools of his country, said Molotov, the children are taught to regard Canada as one of the world's major powers."

Not too much should be made of this exchange (it is not reported in Pearson's memoirs except for a fleeting reference to "flattering toasts to Canada"); it bears, indeed, a close resemblance to what George Kennan recalls as the "slightly disreputable" remarks which passed ritualistically between himself and assorted Latin American presidents some years before (" 'You, Mr. Kennan, are an official of the government of a great country; and I am only the President of an obscure little country'; 'Ah, Mr. President, that may be, but we are all aware that there is no connection between the size of a country and the amount of political wisdom it can produce.'") Much more significant is the deliberately depreciating analysis of Canada's place in the world put out from the Prime Minister's office on May 29, 1968, soon after Pierre Trudeau arrived there:

"Canada's position in the world is now very different from that of the postwar years. Then we were probably the largest of the small powers. Our currency was one of the strongest. We were the fourth or fifth trading nation and our economy was much stronger than the European economies. We had one of the very strongest navy [sic] and air forces. But now Europe has regained its strength. The Third World has emerged. . . .

"These are the broad lines of the international environment in which Canada finds itself today. What are we proposing to do about it? We are going to begin with a thorough and comprehensive review of our foreign policy which embraces defence, economic and aid policies. . . ."

Without prejudging the findings of that review, it was nonetheless possible to state in a word what its objective ought to be. The word was "realism": "Realism — that should be the operative word in our definition of international aim. Realism in how we read the world barometer. Realism in how we see ourselves thriving in the climate it forecasts." And the first requirement of realism was that "we should not exaggerate the extent of our influence upon the course of world events".

In the course of public speaking over the next few months, the Prime Minister returned again and again to this opening theme. On December 18, 1968, asked by an interviewer if Canada should revert to its postwar role as a leader of the middle powers, Mr. Trudeau demurred:

"Personally I tend to discount the weight of our influence in the world. . . . I think we should be modest, much more modest than we were, I think, in the postwar years when we were an important power because of the disruption of Europe and so on. But right now we're back to our normal size as it is and I think we must realize that we have limited energy, limited resources and, as you said earlier, intellectual and [sic] manpower. Therefore, we must use modesty. . . . We shouldn't be trying to run the world."

On January 1, 1969:

" . . . We're living in a world where the strategy is dominated by two powers. All we can do is talk a little bit about tactics but not much."

And on March 25, 1969 (to the National Press Club in Washington):

"I hope that we Canadians do not have an exaggerated view of our own importance. . . . We may be excused, I hope, if we fail to take too seriously the suggestions of some of our friends from time to time that our acts, or our failure to act — this or that way — will have profound international consequences or will lead to wide-scale undesirable results."

No one familiar with the role of a prime minister in the formulation of Canadian foreign policy will be surprised to learn that these ideas emerged relatively intact as the basic philosophy of the White Paper embodying the results of the foreign policy review when it appeared in 1970. Much has been written about *Foreign Policy for Canadians* — if the purpose was to spark discussion, it succeeded admirably in that purpose — to which there is no need to add. But one point must be made.

It was the Prime Minister's expectation and intention that the results of the review would endure. He believed that the review would outfit Canadians with a foreign policy that would do them for a couple of decades. "When you make a decision to review your foreign policy," Mr. Trudeau remarked in Calgary on April 12, 1969, "it will last for quite a while . . . . You only re-examine your foreign policy once in a generation. You can't switch every year, you can't switch after every election."

Here is a major error. You can switch, and you must. To stay put for so long is

*Prime Minister's  
ideas  
embodied  
in White Paper*