

## Rhetoric and performance in foreign policy

reluctantly agreed to allow the testing of the Cruise missile. The problem with this observation is that regardless of whether one approves of the Cruise missile, there is no evidence of a serious debate about the abandonment of the strategy of suffocation which was involved in the decision to allow the testing of the Cruise. One suspects, therefore, that the suffocation strategy was untended by the Prime Minister and gradually lost any prominence it had in Canadian foreign policy, and that a forceful initiative would be required again to place arms control measures in the forefront of foreign policy concerns.

If such is the case, it is unlikely to come from the latest pronouncements of Mr. Trudeau, particularly his speech to UNSSOD II this year. Here Mr. Trudeau repeated his earlier argument for a strategy of suffocation, though in a less compelling way, and suggested that it be "enfolded into a more general policy of stabilization." This more general policy, he said, has two components: the strategy of suffocation, and "our current negotiating approach aimed at qualitative and quantitative reductions in nuclear arsenals designed to achieve a stable nuclear balance at lower levels."

### Not necessarily breathless

The Prime Minister has logic on his side in this enlargement of the suffocation strategy — it makes sense to control weapons in being as well as to prevent new weapons systems from development — but in reality it appears that he has accepted the orthodoxy of the alliance position. One week earlier, in the NATO meeting in Bonn on June 10, Mr. Trudeau had emphasized the value of the range of negotiating fora now developed in East-West diplomacy. President Reagan's offer to begin strategic negotiations with the Soviet Union at the end of June, he argued, effectively rounded out the arms control framework of the Geneva negotiations on intermediate range nuclear weapons, the Vienna meetings on mutual and balanced force reductions, and the continuing effort to strengthen the processes of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. In this speech the Prime Minister emphasized arms control efforts even while allowing the need to match the Soviet buildup in Europe, apparently content to stress within the counsels of the alliance the need to take any reasonable opportunity to bring about arms reductions, but not making specific proposals, and implicitly accepting the two-track approach as he had done at Notre Dame.

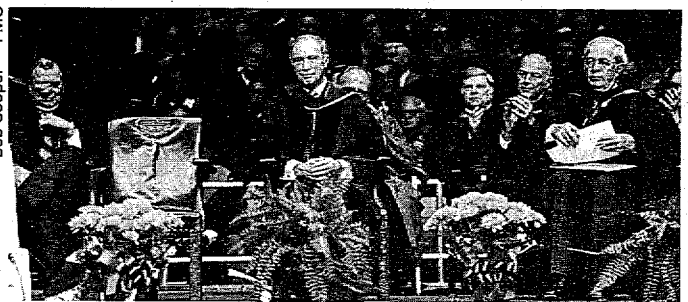
Nobody can say that serious initiatives come easily in the disarmament field. It is not, therefore, quite fair to criticize the Prime Minister for failing to offer any original proposals in the debate. But it is reasonable to note that precisely the same pattern emerges in the arms control field as in North-South issues: there is little or no translation of general purpose and declaration into specific policies, and no fruitful confrontation of the difficulties and costs which independent initiatives would pose. In both cases the outcome is that the Prime Minister alienates the domestic groups most anxious to pursue and develop the broad statements of purpose which the Prime Minister himself sets out.

In the disarmament field, this is easily illustrated by his latest UN speech in which he referred at the very outset to the proposal for a declaration of no-first-use of nuclear weapons. In Canada this controversial proposal has been espoused by the MPs who submitted a Minority Report in

the Committee inquiry into security and disarmament. They made four recommendations: a freeze on nuclear weapons, a reversal of the decision to allow testing of the Cruise, acceptance of the no-first-use doctrine, and measures to increase public awareness of disarmament issues. Mr. Trudeau replied in his UN speech by arguing that the Charter already bound the signatories to the principle of no-first-use of force — any force — so to limit the obligation to nuclear weapons would be to detract from the generality of the Charter.

This legalistic response seems almost calculated to put off those most anxious to pursue disarmament issues: not only does it ignore the immediate issue — the use of tactical nuclear weapons to defend Western Europe — but it essentially contradicts many of Mr. Trudeau's own arguments, including some in the same speech, which have emphasized the need to deal first with the problem of nuclear weapons.

Bob Cooper — PMO



Prime Minister addressing Notre Dame convocation

Along with his failure to respond to the call for a freeze on nuclear weapons production — an essential element in the strategy of suffocation — it is bound to frustrate those domestic groups which have placed high value on the pursuit and development of the suffocation strategy.

This is not to suggest that the Prime Minister is at fault merely because he does not accept the proposals of the Minority Report. But it does indicate again a gap between rhetoric and commitment in the Prime Minister's foreign policy performance, which leads to some broad conclusions.

*First*, the Prime Minister has not succeeded, assuming this to be his intention, in focussing the energies of his various administrations on the grand themes that he has quite persuasively identified in his foreign policy speeches. *Second*, he has been unable or unwilling to engage the continuing support of those domestic groups most interested in the ideas that he has put forward. Symptomatically, perhaps, not one of his major foreign policy speeches has been to a domestic audience — an understandable situation in the light of the occasions most appropriate to such speeches, but an omission which is not lost on activist groups within Canada. *Third*, his speeches reveal that the Prime Minister has moved far away from his concern in the early seventies with the notion of national interest, emphasizing instead the themes of international community and responsibility. With time running out on him, however, he has not developed policies to give substance to those themes, nor has he evoked public support for his distinctive version of an enlightened foreign policy. A characteristically "Trudeauvian" foreign policy, on a par with the internationalism of the Pearson era, may be difficult to achieve in modern times, but is surely part of the ambition of a Prime Minister whose leadership will soon span close to a generation in Canadian foreign policy. □