

# The Goal: Nuclear Disarmament

## The Obstacles: The U.S., NATO, Ottawa



**JIM CRESKEY**

Remember the Red Tories? There was John Diefenbaker, Robert Stanfield, Dalton Camp and Joe Clark, to name a few.

Clark, Canada's 16<sup>th</sup> prime minister, came forward recently to write the introduction to the newly published memoirs of another, somewhat lesser known Red Tory, Doug Roche.

Clark and Roche were not especially close in their House of Commons days. Roche had supported Claude Wagner in the 1976 leadership bid against Clark and politics has a long memory.

In his introduction to Roche's new book, *Creative Dissent: A Politician's Struggle for Peace*, Clark diplomatically points out the distance that existed between them: "Doug and I were not particularly close as parliamentary colleagues." And that despite the fact that they were both Progressive Conservatives elected from Alberta in 1972.

But Clark's introduction to the Roche memoirs is in itself a kind of reconciliation between the two and a glowing tribute to Roche as one of Canada's most accomplished, experienced and idealistic internationalists.

If ever a man was born to raise Canada's best values on the international stage, it was

Roche. That he never became foreign minister has more to do with his idealism than his political bad luck.

Roche had a good idea that most everybody else in his political world was afraid to try. His ideals were, and are, unswervingly dedicated to peace, and he knew clearly that there was one job he had to do. That job proved tough enough to break anyone who didn't have Roche's faith.

Most people, if they had to choose one single, most important goal for Canada's foreign policy, might want to offer several possibilities.

But for Roche, in his roles as former Progressive Conservative member of Parliament, ambassador and senator, the one answer became his life's work: the abolition of nuclear weapons, pure and simple.

Roche came to the conclusion that no other threat to human security is so critical. Nuclear weapons have a proven ability to annihilate entire civilian populations, destabilize an already fragile environment and create poverty and forced migration after only one blow. They are the background doom that runs the risk of being unleashed deliberately or accidentally during any other global crisis. And make no mistake about it, this isn't just about Iran and North Korea or some murky terrorist group. The nuclear problem rests squarely on the shoulders of the nuclear powers, especially the United States and Russia.

Serving as Canada's ambassador for disarmament, Roche stretched his diplomatic assignment to its limits—some said past its

limits—to make the nuclear non-proliferation treaty his single goal. But the obstacles were formidable. They were: the United States, NATO and the Ottawa bureaucracy, in that order.

Roche took to heart the meaning of former U.S. president and general Dwight Eisenhower when he said: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in a final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, from those who are cold and are not clothed."

Like Eisenhower, Roche had learned that wars of the future could not ultimately be won with arms. So he set out to use Canada's influence to rid the world of the most dangerous product of the arms dealers, the nukes.

Roche's hopes, as everyone knows, are far from seeing a sunrise. If anything, Canada and the United States have moved in opposite directions. But Roche continues. He will go wherever he is asked to go, talk to whom-ever will listen.

If Canada was ever punching above its weight to make the world a more peaceful place, it was because of people like Roche. How he went about this, and continues to this day, makes for a page-turner of an autobiography for parliamentary insiders and peace advocates alike. And it's a great book for anyone who has ever experienced or considered a career in politics or diplomacy.

Embassy senior editor Jim Creskey will interview Doug Roche on stage at the National Library and Archives on Wednesday, Oct. 15 at 7:30 PM. See listings page 18 from more details.

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Retired parliamentarian Doug Roche continues to fight against nuclear proliferation, and has written a new autobiography about his efforts.

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