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LATIN AMERICA: CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE

Text of a Speech by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Paul Martin, to the Second Annual Banff Conference on World Development, August 24, 1964.

... You have taken the interesting and significant theme, "Latin America: Challenge and Response". I have no doubt that you will deal with it in a manner worthy of Arnold Toynbee, whose language you have used in this title. While there are other areas which have captured the headlines in recent weeks, and notably the Cyprus crisis, it seems to me that for Canadians there can be few regions of the globe which should command more attention than Latin America. For far too long, although for understandable reasons, the attention of Canadians has often tended to concentrate on Western Europe, and on the Commonwealth. Even in this hemisphere our good friend and neighbour the U.S.A. has sometimes by its size and importance obscured our view of Latin America.

In rough terms the population of Latin America is now over 200 million, rather more than that of the United States and Canada together. However, the demographic projections of United Nations experts indicate a very different situation by the end of the century. Latin America may then contain up to 600 million people, while North America will have not much more than 300 million. This fantastic population increase - the highest rate of any region in the world - cannot fail to add to the relative international importance of Latin America. There is reason to believe, however, that it will at the same time increase its serious economic and social problems. Very great economic growth will undoubtedly result but, when considered in relation to population, the material benefits may well fall short of popular expectations.

The prospects for Latin America are thus both promising and disturbing. It is because the outlook is uncertain that I consider Canada and Canadians have an obligation to study and to assess sympathetically the significance of developments in Latin America. Some months before his death, President Kennedy declared: "I regard Latin America as the most critical area in the world today." In a recent article, Senator Hubert Humphrey, a member of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, took this