

happening in Central America. Nor can any eventual solution to the conflict be a workable one unless it fully addresses both these major elements in a comprehensive way.

Canadian view

I believe that the states in the region have the right to choose to follow whatever ideological path their peoples decide. I don't believe that when a country chooses a Socialist or even Marxist path it necessarily buys a "package" which automatically injects it into the Soviet orbit. This, I think, is where our views and those of the U.S.A. may diverge. The internal systems adopted by countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, whatever these systems may be, do not in themselves pose a security threat to this hemisphere. It is only when countries adopt systems which deliberately link themselves to outside forces or seek to destabilize their neighbours that a threat is posed. Canada has adopted a flexible approach in this regard. For example, we have not shifted our aid programs or our support because a régime has moved to the left in its internal affairs.

To take one example, Canada continued aid to Cuba up until the point when Cuba decided that it could afford the luxury of despatching expeditionary forces to Africa. Clearly it then had no more need for Canadian aid, given its new priorities. Consequently, we stopped giving Canadian aid.

What the Canadian government is saying is this. Let countries choose their own paths for their own development. If they keep their social and humanitarian obligations to their people in the forefront of their actions, they will have Canada's help. If they work to meet the real needs of their people, they will have our support.

But, if their priorities are such that they put a premium on destabilizing their neighbours or using their territory to inject East-West rivalries into the region, they must be viewed as detracting from the security of the hemisphere. And if they fail to carry out the social and economic reforms urgently needed, Canada cannot help but draw the necessary conclusions.

The current focus of world attention in Central America is the conflict in El Salvador. The manner in which this conflict develops — how it is solved or not solved — will have enormous significance for all of Central America. El Salvador is a tragedy in itself. But the risk is that the East-West dimension of this conflict will sow the seeds of a much wider conflagration. This is why there must be a balanced solution found, and found quickly.

One of the focal points of the crisis in El Salvador had been the determination of the Duarte government to hold elections for a constituent assembly. Those elections were held three days ago. Perhaps now is an appropriate time to review the Canadian government's position, its actions, and to make several remarks on possible directions for the future.

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