

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.

First of all, what has Canada done to promote a peaceful solution to the conflict?

I met twice in 1981, in January and December, with representatives of the revolutionary leadership, the FMLN/FDR, to listen to their point of view and to urge negotiations with a view to a democratic solution through elections. I offered Canada's good offices to provide a site in Canada, or abroad at a Canadian Embassy, for such negotiations. The FMLN/FDR rejected these efforts; they prefer direct access to power, whether through negotiation or by force of arms.

We continue to favour a peaceful settlement brought about by the Salvadorans themselves. Canada is ready to seize any opportunity to play a constructive role with the agreement of all the parties concerned. Canada, like the United States, has welcomed the efforts of President Lopez Portillo of Mexico to prepare the ground for a solution in El Salvador and to reduce tension between the United States, Cuba and Nicaragua.