



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA AND THE PACIFIC: AGENDA FOR THE EIGHTIES

An Address by Mr. A.E. Gotlieb, Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to a Seminar at the University of Toronto – York University – Toronto, April 16, 1981

...In the postwar period Canada's Pacific personality has reached a point of considerable complexity. The economic/commercial fact is perhaps the most obvious and the activity of the private sector reflects its importance. In the Asia/Pacific region, the countries of which enjoy a gross national product now close to 75 per cent of that of the United States, Japan is our second most important trading partner, while economic relations with the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN], Korea, India, China, Australia and New Zealand have been developing rapidly and offer the potential for continued expansion and growth. Indeed, most relevant indicators suggest that the dynamism of the Asia/Pacific region will not falter and will represent an ever-growing attraction for Canadian trade and investment.

Political ties

The political dimension of our relations with this area, which is fundamental to the promotion of Canadian interests, has also developed considerably. We have strong political ties with many Asia/Pacific nations and an active concern for events which challenge regional peace and security. Our commitment to the rule of law in international relations and collective security has drawn us into United Nations supervisory exercises both in Northwest and Southwest Asia, as well as into the United Nations emergency operation in Korea in the early 1950s. We recognized the People's Republic of China long before most of our friends in the West and the establishment of relations allowed us to make efforts to expand the international perceptions of the Peking government. In the early 1970s it became clear that Canadian and Japanese interests in the Pacific were intersecting more and more and a conscious effort was made to enhance the political aspects of relations. Most recently ASEAN has achieved a level of internal cohesion and co-operation that no one could have expected only five years ago. Canada has supported this development and the Secretary of State for External Affairs last year attended meetings with his ASEAN counterparts within the context of their foreign ministers' consultations. He will be meeting them again in Manila this June and we expect that this will become an annual event on the minister's calendar.

Cultural ties

There have also been efforts to expand activity by our cultural, academic and media communities. Cultural exchanges are increasing, Asian studies are taking a foothold in some Canadian universities and there are indications that the Canadian media are following more closely some aspects of Asia/Pacific affairs. In addition, provincial governments, particularly those of the Canadian West, are taking a much more active interest in this part of the world.

Some might ask why this range of activity is necessary; what relevance it has to the development of relations. It is our conviction that the full potential to Canada of the
