

Canada and the New Europe

The following are excerpts from a speech delivered by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, at Humber College, Lakeshore Campus, Toronto, on May 26.

Around the world, 1989 will be remembered as the year of European revolution... Canadians watched with wonder as what we thought would take decades came to pass in weeks. The impossible suddenly became possible and the dream became reality. But that reality, while hopeful, also carries heavy responsibilities — for Europeans and for Canadians.

If 1989 was the year of revolution, 1990 marks the beginning of a decade of reconstruction... The events of 1989 swept away oppressive and outdated economic and political structures. But new societies and new institutions remain to be built. That task has only just begun.

The remarkable events in Central and Eastern Europe are intensely personal for millions of Canadians whose roots are there. Many have ties of language and family. Some were forced to flee by the very regimes which have now collapsed. Most have family or friends whose hopes were thwarted, or lives diminished, by those old regimes, but who have the prospect now of building new lives and new societies in old homelands.

Virtually no other nation possesses the web of intense personal connections to Eastern and Central Europe which we have in Canada. That gives us a special interest, and a special capacity, in helping those societies become prosperous and free.

The revolution of 1989 has fundamental implications for the entire European continent — and for North America which, in terms of culture and history, is Europe across the Atlantic. The requirement for leadership and imagination extends across all issues — political, military and economic. That requires a new Canadian approach not only to

Central and Eastern Europe but towards the entire European region.

On February 5th, at McGill University in Montreal, I announced the initiation of a review of our policy towards Europe. The purpose of that review has been to define Canadian interests in Europe and to develop a strategy to secure those interests. I would like to share some thoughts with you that have arisen through that review.

I begin with two basic observations. The first is this: Canada's stake in Europe should not be taken for granted. We have interests around the world and our past preoccupation with Europe is no argument for a focus for the future. Nostalgia is no basis for policy. Our interests in Europe are real, contemporary and compelling.

The second observation is that Canada's wishes will not necessarily determine Canada's role.

Powerful new economic and political forces are at work, forces over which Canada has limited influence. A European role will not be bestowed upon us because we decide it is in our interests. It must be earned. That requires imagination and realism and hard work.

What are Canada's primary interests in the new Europe?

One of them is to help ensure that Europe does not again become what it once was. Another is to help ensure that Europe becomes a positive force for change both at home and around the world.

Our primary interest is the interest in peace. Two world wars this century have taught Canadians that a Europe at peace with itself is a Europe at peace with the world. Security in Canada has no meaning without security in Europe.

Our economic prosperity depends upon stability in the world. Threats to that stability are threats to our prosperity.

More directly, as a country dependent on trade for 30 percent of our GNP, the unifying market of Western Europe is vital for jobs and prosperity in Canada, and the vast and untapped markets of Eastern Europe constitute a long-term opportunity of potentially immense proportions.

Politically, the values which have triumphed in Europe are our values too. We rejoice in their ascendancy and also take comfort in the fact that democracies are inherently more peaceful than the totalitarian alternative. The construction of durable democracies there is not only a moral quest; it is also a security imperative.

Finally, Canadian interests in the new Europe relate not only to what occurs there but also to what is occurring elsewhere. For decades, our preoccupation with a brittle peace in Europe has hindered our ability to deal with mount-

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ing global problems — the threat to the global environment, the crises of international development and debt, the evils of the international drug trade and the proliferation of terror and weapons of mass destruction. Many of these problems do not have European origins. But our preoccupation with Europe — ideologically and militarily — has kept these other priorities far too low on the global agenda. With Europe at peace with itself, we can turn together to a planet in need of urgent action.

So we are not interested in Europe for reasons of history, or nostalgia, and certainly not for reasons of charity. It is not only their prosperity which is at stake, it is ours. It is not only their security, it is ours.

While our interests in Europe remain strong, the means by which we pursue those interests must change radically. They must change to reflect the new security framework now in evolution; they must change to reflect the growing power and unity of Western Europe;