



Statements and Speeches

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CANADA AND THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES

A Statement by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, Ottawa, June 16, 1981

Yesterday in the government-initiated debate, the Prime Minister, Mr. Trudeau, spoke of the flash-points of crisis in international life against the backdrop of global challenges and difficulties. In my own contribution, I addressed specific foreign policy dilemmas that we face in the framework of Canadian foreign policy values. Today, on an NDP (New Democratic Party) motion, we are invited to continue the debate on Canada's international relations, with particular reference to South and Central America, and, by way of example, we are directed to consider the tragedy of El Salvador.

The countries of South and Central America all, without exception, belong to the Third World, and in a general debate on foreign affairs I believe it is incumbent upon me to advance some generalizations about our foreign policy towards the Third World as a whole.

Obviously, my response must admit both diversity and nuance. The quality of Canada's relations is not the same with small, remote islands as with large, developing countries. Neighbours have a different priority from those remote from us. We protect and cherish the special links of the Commonwealth and la Francophonie.

Even though the process of decolonization has been largely completed, many developing countries remain highly volatile. Government methods and social forms are often still in formation or are fragile. It is in the interest of democratic countries like Canada that Third World states develop freely-created institutions which correspond to the needs of their own societies and form the basis for stable government, while at the same time providing adequate protection of individual human rights.

Whatever attractions Communist ideologies may have had in the first blush of post-colonialism, they have been overtaken since then by the self-serving record of the U.S.S.R. in the developing world and the poor economic performances of most Eastern European countries. There has also been a diminution of the compulsive anti-Western sentiments which often characterized political views in the developing countries two decades ago. These trends have in fact all combined to create a more positive set of circumstances for co-operation between Third World and Western countries.

However, Canada's first principle towards the Third World is the promotion of genuine independence, non-alignment and stability. Putting it another way, I can say that we want to immunize the Third World from, rather than involve it in, East/West confrontation. As I said yesterday, our approach is to treat Third World countries on their own merits. Our goal is, in fact, a pluralistic world in which there

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