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Interview with DPM/SSEA April 16

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The crisis that grips the nations of Central America is of great interest to the whole world, not least of all to Canadians. It involves wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions only a few thousand miles south of this country. Canada's Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, returned late on Friday from a 10 day visit to Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Honduras and I welcome Mr. MacEachen to our Ottawa studio. Good morning, Sir.

DPM/SSEA: Good morning.

Q: As a Nova Scotian, I imagine you have the odd bear story as well, but let us turn our attention this morning to other matters. Mr. MacEachen, all week we've been hearing about one of the largest assaults to date on Nicaragua by the Contras. This morning we hear the Contras have occupied an Atlantic port there. You're just back. Do you believe the source of the conflict that we're now seeing is an East-West source, as the President claims, as President Reagan claims, or is it simply endemic to that part of the world? Is it the social conditions of Central America.

DPM/SSEA: Well I think that it would be a mistake to say that what is happening there is totally related to East-West rivalry. I think that has been brought into the situation. It is now there, but I think the Central American countries which I visited have very many local or endemic problems, as you term it. There are a lot of things that they have to do to straighten out their economies, their social organization, their politics, in order to handle their own affairs successfully. But when you add to that the intrusion of outsiders in the form of military advisers or military forces, I think you complicate the situation very badly and you put in the way of necessary social and political change additional obstacles. I think it's a very complex and difficult situation that's going to take a lot of time to correct.