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Notes for a speech by the  
Right Honourable Joe Clark,  
Secretary of State for  
External Affairs, to the  
Canada-Israel Committee  
Annual Conference

OTTAWA

November 26, 1986.

Mr. Chairman,  
Dear Friends,

I take particular pleasure in being here today, to renew associations with the great number of you whom I have known, worked with and come to depend on through our common involvement in the major issues of our day. There has been an immense collective contribution by people in this room to all aspects of Canadian life from community work to human rights to national politics. It is part of your faith and tradition to make the community work.

In this context, may I pay a special tribute to your national chairman. I have now been dealing with Sydney Spivak for a quarter of a century. His Manitoba voice has been a trusted, compassionate, authoritative source of wise counsel on all items on the national agenda. Adlai Stevenson once said of his part of the Midwest - "On the prairies you can look a long way in all directions." Sid Spivak, while always true to his roots, has brought that gift of broad prospective to all his responsibilities. More than a chairman, he is also a symbol of the commitment and genuine sensitivity of your communities to the major currents and preoccupations of our lively and diverse society.

As a national organization, you have your own clear focus. I think it important to note, and to commend you for, the care and attention with which you relate your specific interests to the aspirations of Canadians -- cultural, economic, social, technical, regional, linguistic, religious and spiritual. This is a natural outcome of the richness and scope of Canada's ties with the State of Israel. The CIC is respected and effective because you match Canadian interests with the vast potential of our relations with Israel. You formulate those relations in terms which Canadians throughout the country can understand and appreciate. You speak with an authority which I am pleased to acknowledge.

Twenty months ago, I outlined to you the Government's approach to the relationship between Canada and Israel. Today, I would like to provide you with an account of our efforts over this period.

The position of the Canadian government is clear. Prime Minister Mulroney has expressed it this way:

"The ties between Canada and Israel and between our two peoples are multifold. They draw their strength from shared cultural and spiritual values, a deep commitment to democracy and freedom and a desire for a durable peace. These are enduring bonds which I am determined to enhance and reinforce".

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Political dialogue of the first order between Canada and Israel is both a requirement and a measure of our friendship. The priority we attach to this dialogue has been fully reciprocated by the Government of Israel. Particularly demonstrative of that dialogue was Prime Minister Peres coming to Ottawa during his final days in office to share his conclusions after the historic Summit of Alexandria. Our Prime Minister has valued his meetings with Mr. Peres and Mr. Shamir and other representatives of Israel, as have I, here, and at the United Nations and in Israel.

I look forward particularly to meeting later today with Abba Eban, one of the genuine statesmen of the World, and having the opportunity to discuss international events with him.

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The many direct contacts between Israeli and Canadian leaders are not only a reflection of the close human ties that bind our countries. They also reflect the primordial concern of successive Canadian Governments for the security and well-being of the State of Israel. This has been a fundamental element of Canadian Middle East policy since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. It expresses the real sense of solidarity of Canadians with a democracy which we genuinely and deeply admire.

There are few areas where Canada has been more involved over the decades, than in the Middle East. Our concern for peace in the region is also naturally a concern for Israel. We support all constructive efforts to move from confrontation to negotiation of regional issues. We remain hopeful at the prospect of talks with the Kingdom of Jordan. We welcomed the Taba arbitration agreement. At the Ifrane and Alexandria Summits, we were stirred by the courageous and farsighted leaders who were willing to take risks for peace. In my visit to the region in April and in my meetings with Israeli leaders, I have made clear the earnest desire of the Canadian Government to contribute in any way possible to the search for a lasting peaceful settlement based on the legitimate rights of both sides: security for Israel through recognized borders and a homeland for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

We have demonstrated our readiness in practical ways. On March 31 of this year, at the request of Israel and Egypt, Canada became a member of the Ten-Nation Multilateral Force and Observers which supervises the application in the Sinai of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. Our contribution is in the form of a helicopter squadron and staff officers, totalling 137 men and women. We also participate in UNDOF, on the Golan Heights, and in the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) which has its headquarters in Jerusalem. We intend to continue our support to peacekeeping in the Middle East.

Of course, our concern over the Middle East is not restricted to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

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The continuation of the tragic and senseless war between Iran and Iraq threatens the political and economic stability of the entire region. Canada strongly supports an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal to internationally recognized borders, and the initiation of negotiations towards a peaceful settlement. As a matter of policy we do not supply arms to either side. We urge both Iran and Iraq to make use of the UN Security Council's good offices to bring this war to an end. Canada is directly involved in alleviating the misery of those affected by this bloody confrontation and has repeatedly supported financially the International Committee of the Red Cross in their prisoner of war program between Iran and Iraq. Throughout this terrible conflict, Canada has been particularly active in urging both sides to respect international humanitarian law, especially with respect to the applicability of the Geneva Conventions. We are one of the nations in the world which can, by our word and by our example, assert the primacy of international order and respect for international law and institutions.

The same spirit has animated the Government's response to the scourge of international terrorism. We have pursued the fight against the most recent forms of terrorism along every avenue which showed promise of bearing fruit, bilaterally, as during Prime Minister Mulroney's most recent meeting with Mr. Peres, and multilaterally, as in the context of the Industrialized Summit at Tokyo and ICAO. The challenge in responding to terrorism is to enlarge the net of effective international action. That often collides with an individual nation's sense of sovereignty or its determination to pursue its own goals. But determination yields result, and this year, in the International Civil Aviation Organization, Canada was successful in having adopted a measure which extends to airports the powers of arrest and extradition which were previously confined to acts on aircraft themselves.

Canada has condemned Syrian involvement in the El Al bombing attempt. As you know we were the first country to support the British action after the Hindawi verdict. We recalled our Ambassador to Syria for consultations and he is still in Canada. When he does return to Damascus, he will carry a very firm message to the Syrian authorities on the unacceptability of support for and involvement in international terrorism. Western reaction to the Hindawi verdict has stung the Syrians. Let us pray that their future actions will reflect a desire to play a more constructive role in the family of nations.

May I now turn to human rights, an area where policy coordination with Israel has born particular fruit. The plight of Soviet Jewry is a case in point albeit only one example. Canada has repeatedly urged the Soviet Union to respect the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of all its citizens, including Soviet Jews. The Soviet Union has recently released a number of prominent and longstanding refuseniks, among them the Shcharanskys and Orlovs , both of these cases have long and repeatedly been the subject of Canadian representations. But the repression suffered by the many others who remain behind has continued and Jewish emigration levels may reach an all-time low this year. I have personally impressed upon Soviet leaders, most recently upon foreign Minister Shevardnadze, that if the Soviet Union does not improve upon its human rights record, this will damage Canada-USSR relations. And I have obtained Mr. Shevardnadze's agreement to consider personally the specific cases of a number of Soviet Jews whose circumstances cry out for compassion.

We have also urged the Soviet Union to allow families to be reunited in Israel. We will be studying very closely the recent decree on Soviet emigration policy. I am profoundly disappointed, however, that the decree apparently makes no specific reference to the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. But the real test will not be decrees or conferences on human rights. We must focus our attention on results. Are cases of interest to Canada being resolved? Are Soviet Jews being allowed to emigrate? Those are the standards against which Soviet protestations will have to be judged.

I believe that our greatest chance of success lies in maintaining firm and committed pressure on the Soviet Union to honour its existing obligations to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. We will continue to work hard in all forums, including the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to encourage the Soviet Union to allow families to be reunited and to end the repression suffered by refuseniks and others in the USSR.

When I visited Jerusalem In April this year, I said that part of the challenge facing Canada and Israel is to broaden and deepen the direct relations between our two countries. I would like to review a few areas where the Government has taken action.

In Israel last April, I had the pleasure of signing an Air Agreement between Canada and Israel which supercedes the Agreement of 1971. The new treaty provides landing rights in Toronto in addition to Montreal. Increased air services between Canada and Israel can only enhance the close relationship between Canada and Israel, a relationship separated only by distance and not by wish. Exporters and importers, workers, artists and tourists will all benefit from increased access to each others countries. Last year saw 30,000 Canadians visit Israel, the Holy Land, while in return 37,000 Israelis visited Canada. Rough balance, at this very high level, has been a constant in the past and I would note with considerable satisfaction that there are few countries in the world where Canada has a similar pattern of reciprocity.

Although Canada is not one of Israel's major trading partners, commercial activity between our two countries has been increasing steadily over the past few years. Israel is in fact Canada's third most important market in the Middle East. The balance of trade has been in Canada's favour until this year. Partial figures for 1986 up to and including August, show that Israel, with exports to Canada of approximately \$95 million, has surpassed Canadian exports of approximately \$70 million, for the same period.

We believe substantial opportunity remains for strengthening commercial and economic ties. Our governments have now established various mechanisms to foster and assist companies in both countries to cooperate in industrial development. While these mechanisms expand the possibility for a greater scope to our economic relations, it must be remembered that ultimately, it will be up to our respective private sectors to pursue commercial opportunities. We must not allow business to be inhibited by protectionism or other by impediments.

One of the more promising areas of mutual interest has been in the fields of research and development and the exchange of technology where the sharing of experience can do much to contribute to the well-being of both our peoples. Currently, several technology transfer agreements for the Canadian production of Israeli high tech products are being discussed in the fields of medical instruments, veterinary pharmaceuticals and agricultural machinery. For their part, the private sector in our two countries, view this activity as an important two-way flow of technology and investment.

Canada and Israel are also looking at ways of jointly alleviating the plight of less developed nations. Both our countries are blessed with the greatest resource that can be offered, a highly educated, motivated, and resourceful population. If these resources can be tapped for the developing world, if our expertise can be transferred, Canadians and Israelis together can use their skills for the benefit of the Third World. To this end, we are working on ways of implementing a joint aid project, a project where both countries' talents be combined for the benefit of the less fortunate.

Mr. Chairman, Dear Friends, all of what I have just too briefly outlined amounts to a comprehensive significant, substantial partnership with Israel. I hope I have conveyed my own sense of its priority both in terms of my own and the Government's agenda. I always welcome the input of the CIC. Thank you for your vital contribution to one of the most dynamic and crucial dimensions of Canada's foreign relations.