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86/25

Speech by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, at a dinner
hosted by Mr. Yitzhak Shamir,
Vice-Premier and Minister of
Foreign Affairs of Israel,
King David Hotel, Jerusalem,
April 12

OTTAWA

April 14, 1986.

Vice-Premier and Mrs. Shamir, Distinguished Guests:

It is a great pleasure for Maureen and me to be your guests tonight. I was last in Israel in 1979. That is a long time not to have visited friends. I am delighted to be back. Your wonderful hospitality, the opportunity to meet with so many of you, and our free exchanges of views have made this a truly memorable visit.

My visit to Israel is a reflection of the importance Canadians attach to your remarkable country, and the many human and cultural ties we share.

More than a strong nation, Israel is an enduring example of determination and democracy, vision and values. You, Sir, have dedicated your life for your nation and, with other Israelis, given your people roots, made the desert bloom, made the vision real.

Israel's example continues. Your economy is strong. Your government has build national unity out of political division. Your country continues to work for a just and lasting peace. Canadians are proud of the dynamic example of Israel. We are your friends and your supporters.

But our interest is more than that of a good friend. Continuing conflict in the Middle East keeps the world at risk - a risk that grows as workers stream home from idled oil fields, as the war between Iran and Iraq becomes more desperate, and as peace processes falter while the cycle of violence grows.

The elements of peace must be found and agreed to here, in the Middle East. But countries outside the region, like Canada, can help create conditions and provide encouragement to move the process forward. That is why our helicopter unit has joined the multinational force and observers in the Sinai. It is why Canadian aid is directed to development projects in the West Bank, and why we fund schools for refugee children, like the one I inaugurated last week in North Shuna. It is why I have come, to Israel, and to her neighbours, to learn and discuss first-hand how we might advance the process of peace.

Canada is clear and consistent on the principles in question. In my first speech as Foreign Minister, to the General Assembly of the United Nations, I spelled out those principles. We fully support Israel's right to secure and recognized boundaries. We support the right of the Palestinians to a homeland within a clearly defined territory, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We support Security Council Resolution 242 as the only sure way to a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement.

Of course the issues are among the most difficult in the world to resolve. Israel has shown imagination and leadership before, in the peace process. Your treaty with Egypt was a momentous development in the history of the Middle East and of the world. It remains a monument to the wisdom of Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat. I noted that, the day I arrived, you had meetings with Mr. Butros Ghali, and we have welcomed Prime Minister Peres' deliberate reference to the Palestinians as a people. Those actions demonstrate a determination to continue to work towards a secure peace and Canada encourages and supports Israel in that path.

On this trip, I have also visited Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. I have come away with a renewed conviction that, despite many difficulties, a foundation does exist on which peace can be built. I perceived an urgent quality to the desire for peace, an urgency born out of a deeply felt concern that, unless a settlement is reached soon, the region could again slide towards conflict.

The moderation that was shown by the murdered mayor of Nablus, Zafer Al-Masri, is shared by many Palestinians. It is understandable that they need to be assured that their voice will be heard.

We share many of your concerns, including the plight of the Soviet Jewry. The recent release of Mr. Shcharansky was a major achievement, for which his friends, including Canadians, have prayed and toiled. His release should encourage us to redouble our efforts. I have raised the question of Soviet Jews in Moscow, in Kiev, in Helsinki at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and elsewhere. Canada will continue to do everything it can on behalf of Jews wishing to leave the Soviet Union.

Part of our challenge is to broaden and deepen the direct relations between Canada and Israel. Trade between us has increased remarkably, including your exports to Canada. We are working to build even closer commercial and technological links. Our officials are working now to identify a project where we might work together in international development. Tomorrow we sign, officially, the agreement regarding El Al flights between Toronto and Tel Aviv.

There is an excellent Canadian Studies Program at the Hebrew University, and the Canadian Studies Association has been well-established. An important film co-production agreement was signed during your visit to Canada last year. You are sending tourists and missions to Expo in Vancouver, and the tide of Canadian visitors to your country continues unabated.

There is a deep and enduring bond between Canada and Israel. That has been evident everywhere in my meetings, and in Maureen's, as it has been during your visits to Canada. We thank you for your hospitality now, and for your vigour and your vision always.

Ladies and Gentlemen, would you join me please in a toast. To Israel.