

Statement

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SPEECH BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
TO THE BALTIC FEDERATION IN CANADA  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 17TH BALTIC EVENING

OTTAWA

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Secretary of State  
for  
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État  
aux  
Affaires extérieures

Canada

## SYNOPSIS

We have been accustomed to thinking of Canada's multiculturalism exclusively in Canadian domestic terms, but there is an international dimension, a dimension which gives us direct access to a multitude of countries and helps us understand them better.

Sometimes these links create problems when foreign disputes are imported into Canada, but most often as in the case of the Baltic communities in Canada, they create opportunities we should act upon. The presence in Canada of citizens with origins in Central and Eastern Europe gives our country direct and personal connections with Solidarity activists, nationalities of the Baltic States and encourages our ability to encourage glasnost and perestroika. There is a creative, constructive opportunity to make use of Canada's human links to Europe when the Prime Minister and I seek the advice of business leaders pursuing joint ventures in the Soviet Union or when I meet the families who are trying to bring Refusniks or former political prisoners to Canada. But we must be sensible and deliberate, and guided by the pragmatism that makes foreign policy effective. By displaying imagination here at home we can encourage new thinking in the Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe.

President Gorbachev recognized a reality which the Chinese leadership has not-- that economic reform cannot occur without political reform. Fundamental change has occurred in the Soviet Union and more can, and should, be expected. But change should not be so rapid as to provoke a reaction that will undermine successes. The leaders of the Popular Fronts in the Baltic States have demonstrated wisdom in a volatile situation, seeking a peaceful transition to independence. We encourage the Soviet authorities to accept that their best interests are served by granting maximum freedoms to the people of the Baltic States.

New leadership in the USSR provides solid grounds for believing that the will of the people can and will be expressed. We know of no political prisoners today in the Soviet Union, religious tolerance is increasing there, and emigration is higher now than at any time in the past 10 years. Canada has no unresolved family reunification cases with the USSR and private visits to Canada from the USSR increased to 12,000 in 1988 (5,000 in 1986). The democratization process is a major step forward in the USSR. It is only a beginning, but it is a good beginning.

The most remarkable development is a flowering of popular movements in the three Baltic States. The election of popular front representatives to the Congress of People's Deputies gives them a national forum for the pursuit of their objectives. The outcome of this contest of wills between Baltic Supreme Soviets and Moscow is far from clear. The aspirations of the Baltic peoples will not be met all at once, but this government applauds

their efforts to assume responsibility for their own destinies. Canada refuses to recognize de jure the forced incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. Our position of principle on this matter will not change, and the legitimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples must be met. Canada continues to recognize de facto Soviet control over the Baltic States, but to recognize it does not mean we accept its legitimacy.

Large numbers of Canadians are seeking more extensive contacts with the Baltic States. Joint ventures are being pursued, private exchanges of businessmen are occurring, officials of my department have met members of the popular fronts. Canada can help with some of the major problems facing the Baltic States-- the need for economic modernization and development, the threat from environmental pollution, and the need to preserve national identities. The role of my Department is to enhance the potential for contact and communication between the people of Canada and the people of the Baltic States. We will not, however, jeopardize our policy of non-recognition de jure.

The Prime Minister will visit the Soviet Union in November. The business people accompanying him are keen to identify commercial opportunities, and should be encouraged to look to the Baltic States.

In rethinking our relationship with the Warsaw Pact countries, we do not forget the human rights concerns which remain to be satisfied, nor do we forget the aspirations of minorities. But we must recognize change where it has occurred and seek new ways to strengthen the processes already under way.

We have been accustomed to thinking of Canada's multiculturalism exclusively in Canadian domestic terms - the variety it offers; the challenge of drawing the best qualities from different cultures; the tolerance it can teach us here at home. But there is an international dimension to Canada's multicultural character. It provides us direct access to the multitude of countries and societies from which Canadians come. Usually, that helps us understand those countries better, and we can apply that understanding in the exercise of Canada's historic international role as a moderating nation, and a leader in the practical pursuit of human rights. But it can also, in critical times, give us an influence that is not available to countries which lack our links of family and culture and language.

Sometimes those links can create problems, as, for example, when foreign disputes are imported into Canada. But more often, they create opportunities, and we should act on them. Take the case of the Baltic communities in Canada. There once was some fear that the presence in Canada of citizens with origins in Central and Eastern Europe would limit our ability to encourage glasnost or perestroika. The opposite is the case. Your communities can help Canada encourage those changes. Thousands of Canadian citizens speak Estonian, Latvian, Polish, Hungarian, Serbo-Croat, Slovak or Czech. They give Canada direct and personal connections with the activists of Solidarity, the nationalities of the Baltic States, or the faithful seeking to practise the principles of the Ukrainian Uniate Church, or of Judaism in the Soviet Union.

Those are not obstacles to Canadian foreign policy. They are considerable assets, if we have the imagination to make the most of them.

Tomorrow, as the Government continues our consideration of our response to the terrible events in China, I am convening a Roundtable of Canadian experts from outside the Government, who have direct experience in China. This will include Canadians of Chinese origin, as well as scholars, business persons, and others who have lived in that society we seek to influence.

We are taking the same approach to the different changes that are occurring in the Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe. The Prime Minister and I seek the advice of the business leaders who are actually pursuing joint ventures in the Soviet Union. I meet directly with families, like Ala Wolfson or Ivan Shumuk who are trying to bring Refusniks or former political prisoners to Canada. And we believe there is a creative constructive opportunity to make use of Canada's human links to Europe.

We must be sensible and deliberate in the way we use that asset. We must steer between old memories and new enthusiasms, and always be guided by the pragmatism that makes foreign policy effective. But we can help encourage new thinking in the Soviet Union and Eastern and Central Europe by displaying imagination here at home.

That is why I come to you this evening - not just out of courtesy to a significant Canadian community, nor simply to celebrate your culture and your history. I am here to ask your help in Canada's contribution to positive and permanent changes in the Soviet Union, and in Eastern and Central Europe.

This past year has been momentous in relations between East and West.

It has brought elections in Poland and the Soviet Union and the promise of the same in Hungary. In January we signed the Concluding Document to the Vienna Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. New conventional arms negotiations for Europe have begun.

And last month, in Brussels, Prime Minister Mulroney and other Heads of Government commemorated the 40th Anniversary of NATO in a Summit that set out new directions for the Alliance. President Bush's dramatic proposals have regained the negotiating initiative for the West. The Prime Minister's proposal of a new scholarship plan -- to help citizens of Central and Eastern Europe learn about democratic institutions -- helps assure the dynamism of an Alliance that has safeguarded Western security for four decades.

This is a time of profound change in the lands from which many of you and your families came. Like all change, it can be difficult and controversial, and will require both imagination and compromise. We are not spectators in these events. We are part of them - as a nation whose citizens share languages and heritages with Europe; as a country prepared to exercise our influence internationally; as a society whose economic system and political traditions offer encouragement and examples to those seeking changes in Europe.

As we assess these changes, some of you will counsel caution, and we will want to weigh your advice carefully. Others will see opportunities that do not leap to the eyes of our officials.

The developments in China are instructions about how change has been introduced in the USSR. President Gorbachev recognized early a reality which has not penetrated the leadership of China -- economic reform cannot occur without political reform. You cannot ask people to accept the sacrifices of economic reform without also giving them a say in how it will occur. President Gorbachev knew from the outset that the command system had failed. He identified the main cause of its failure -- all the levers of power were being pulled by individuals protected from public scrutiny by a veil of secrecy, reinforced by repressive laws and police practices. It was impossible for all but the bravest to challenge the system.

There were brave challenges.

We know the names of many of those heroes -- Father Svarinskas (SVAR-IN-SKAS), Father Tamkevicius (TAM-KA-VI-CHUS), Mart Niklus, Petras Grazulis, Enn Tarto, Anatoly Shcharansky (SHAR-AN-SKI), Josef Begun, Yuri Shukheyvich (SHOO-KAY-VITCH), Josep Terelya, Stepan Stepeliak, to name only a few. We worked together -- you, other Canadians, and concerned people around the world -- to secure their release from prison, from exile and even from the USSR. You kept them in the public eye before there was glasnost. Their courage contributed to the progress we are now observing as glasnost and perestroika because they showed their compatriots how to retain hope, gave them the courage to resist erosion of their cultural identity. Now Soviet authorities are acknowledging that they need the cooperation, not the passivity, of their population. To gain that cooperation, they are prepared to make concessions.

How far is the Soviet leadership prepared to go? I do not know. Perhaps they do not either. But they have already permitted, and even encouraged, expressions of sentiment which no one would have dared to hope for a couple of years ago. Fundamental change has already occurred. More can - and should - be expected.

But change should not be so rapid as to provoke a reaction undermining all the successes of the past year. The leaders of the Popular Fronts in the Baltics have demonstrated wisdom in a volatile situation, seeking a peaceful transition to independence. We hope their efforts will be crowned with success, so that Soviet authorities will gradually accept that their best interests are served by granting maximum freedoms to the people of the Baltic States. They have to be encouraged to understand this.

The arrival of new leadership in the USSR provides solid grounds for believing that the will of the people can and will be expressed, and that it will have some impact on policy. There is still much to do. But there can be no doubt that great progress has been made in the USSR towards reducing the limitations on individual freedoms.

We welcome the release of political prisoners in the Soviet Union. Religious tolerance is increasing and should be enshrined in the new law on religious practice which the Supreme Soviet is expected to pass this year. The effects of this law will be keenly felt in the Baltic States and will be of key interest to us in terms of its impact on the Ukrainian Uniate Church. We will continue to urge the maximum freedom of religion for all.

Already, the situation has improved beyond anything we could have expected as little as three years ago. Who could have predicted that more than 1600 new religious congregations would be registered in 1988 (as opposed to 104 the year before), that Jewish cultural centres would be formed in communities around the Soviet Union or that religious texts could be imported legally into the Soviet Union?

Emigration from the Soviet Union is higher now than at any time in the past ten years. In the first four months of this year, 57,000 exit permits were granted for emigrants. And this before the new laws on emigration have been enacted by the Supreme Soviet. We look forward to even higher figures once that legislation is approved.

Canada has no unresolved family reunification cases with the USSR. Private visits from the Soviet Union to Canada have multiplied -- from 5,000 in 1986 to 12,000 in 1988.

President Gorbachev seems determined to create a society based on law and he is drawing on the experience of Western countries. The Soviet Supreme Court visited the Supreme Court of Canada last Autumn to discuss a wide range of legal practices, particularly the role of defence counsel. A return visit is planned. Ultimately, of course, it is not the laws but how they are implemented which counts. We will watch closely how the spirit of the new laws is observed.

While the democratization process initiated by President Gorbachev is a major step forward, the results are not democratic in the sense that we would use that word. But the fact is that the Soviet people were given a choice of candidates for the newly-created Congress of People's Deputies. Where no choice existed, they were given the option to reject the single candidate. This they did.

The result was that most of the deputies from the Baltic States were representative of local feelings and local views. That is true also of some deputies from the Ukraine. Many deputies are clearly reformers, most obviously Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Sakharov. But there are dozens more.

There will be those who argue that President Gorbachev has secured for himself a compliant Supreme Soviet which will do as it is told. I do not agree. It is not a revolutionary body, but it is reform-minded. Furthermore, the voices of deputies to the Supreme Soviet, and for that matter of deputies to the Congress, will continue to be heard. The politicization of Soviet society is only beginning, but it is a good beginning.

No one can fail to appreciate the difficulties facing the Soviet Union. The challenge of reforming the economy, the tragedies of Armenia and the train disaster in the Urals, the legacy of Chernobyl, and the ethnic violence of Armenia-Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Georgia. There is a rising tide of demands for greater recognition of the rights of nationalities. These come from around the Soviet Union, from the Ukraine, Belorussia and Moldavia, but most significantly in the Baltic States.

Perhaps the most remarkable development in a unique year in the history of the Soviet Union has been the flowering of the popular movements of the three Baltic States and the acceptance of large parts of their agenda by the local Supreme Soviets. The election of popular front representatives to the Congress of People's Deputies gives them a national forum for the pursuit of their objectives. Live television coverage of the entire session of the Congress showed Baltic representatives demanding a renunciation of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and independence for the Baltic States. This must have been an eye-opener for most of the country which would have been made aware of Baltic concerns for the first time. The agreement to set up a commission of the Congress to look into the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was an admission, at last, that the issue must be addressed.

In the meantime, the Baltic States insist on their independence, refusing to recognize Soviet all-union laws unless they have been approved in their own Supreme Soviets. They have made their languages the official languages of the Baltic States. The Baltic Assembly of Popular Movements which met in Tallinn last month will contribute to the sense of joint purpose of the three Baltic States.

The outcome of the contest of wills between Baltic Supreme Soviets and Moscow is still far from clear.

The aspirations of the Baltic peoples will not be met all at once. But there has been real progress. This Government applauds the efforts of the Baltic peoples to assume responsibility for their own destinies. Glasnost and perestroika provide a context in which a new reality is unfolding, from which we hope there will be no turning back.

Canada continues to refuse to recognize de jure the forced incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. We give substance to that position in a number of important ways:

- First, federal government Ministers and Ambassadors do not travel to the Baltic Republics.
- Second, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remain acceptable designations as places of origin on Canadian passport and immigration documents, and
- Third, as a result of a policy I initiated last year, a disclaimer now appears on all federally-produced maps of the Baltic region reiterating our policy of no de jure recognition of the Soviet annexation.

Our position of principle on this matter will not change. The legitimate aspirations of the Baltic peoples must be met. The basis on which the Soviet Union incorporated the Baltic States was illegal and immoral. The situation must be put right.

There is now a new reality in the Baltic States and together we must determine our response to it. Canada continues to recognize de facto Soviet control over the Baltic States. To recognize it is not to accept its legitimacy. It is the reality. But we have a choice. We can turn our backs on the Baltic region altogether, thereby denying courageous people the encouragement and contact we can offer. Or we can maintain our de jure position and work within the realm of the possible to improve the life of the people there, many of whom are family to you here tonight.

Large numbers of Canadians, particularly those of Baltic origin, are seeking more extensive contacts with the Baltic States, for personal, family, cultural, sports, or commercial purposes. Many of them seek the leadership and assistance of the Canadian Government. So do members of the popular fronts whom officials of my department have met over the past few months, both in Canada and in the Baltic States. A private exchange, under which 28 Estonian businessmen are studying the capitalist market system at York University, has been established and funded by Canadians, most of Estonian origin. Joint ventures between Canadian and Baltic interests are being pursued. There will be a demand for more exchanges to permit closer contacts and establish joint ventures, so that the people of the Baltic States can rebuild the market skills they traditionally possessed and, broaden people-to-people contacts.

Apart from the key issues of independence and economic autonomy the Baltic States face three basic problems: the need for economic modernization and development; the threat from environmental pollution; and the need to preserve their national identities. Canada can help with some, perhaps all, of these issues.

Our focus could first be commercial and economic, whether in the area of management training, joint ventures, or purely commercial transactions. Some of you are already involved in such activities and my Department is ready to help you.

The environment may be another area where our expertise could be useful. We do not have established programs of environmental cooperation with the Baltic States. But Canada would be prepared to share the experience we have developed in an area so crucial to the quality of life.

Canadians of Baltic origins are proud to reinforce the sense of national identity of the peoples of the Baltic States. You have shown that they and their cause are not forgotten. You have maintained contacts to the limit of the possible. Now those contacts will be permitted to grow. You should take advantage of the opportunity. Whether the contacts take the form of family visits, now less difficult to arrange, or whether they are sports events, cultural, media or academic exchanges and meetings, you will strengthen the resolve and confidence of peoples whose fate concerns us all.

This Government has been paying increasing attention to the Baltic States. More officials from my Department and others will travel to the region to ensure that we have the best possible understanding of developments there. We want to ensure an open two-way flow of information with you, too, for as I said, you represent an important asset in the formation of new Canadian foreign policy responses to the changing Baltic scene. My Parliamentary Secretary has been meeting with you for instance, recently addressing the Annual Convention of Baltic Veterans League in March, and the Baltic Womens Federation in April. We will not, however, jeopardize our policy of non-recognition de jure. Our role there will be to enhance the potential for contact and communication between the people of Canada and the people of the Baltic States.

Joint ventures can greatly assist the development of the market ethic, a crucial element in achieving economic progress under perestroika. Some Canadians have been quick to see the potential of such ventures and more will do so in the near future. There are already 10 Canadian-Soviet joint ventures set up since 1988 and another six are close to

completion. A group of Canadian businessmen will travel to the Ukraine in October to identify possibilities there. A Canada-USSR Business Council has been formed led by such companies as Olympia and York, McDonald's Restaurants, Lavalin, Foremost, Fracmaster and Alta Genetics. More than 100 firms should be members of this organization before its first meeting in Moscow in November. More joint ventures can be expected in the Baltic States as new opportunities are identified. The training of managers and the planned follow-up undertaken by Enterprise York are precisely the kind of private initiatives we want to encourage.

In November, the Prime Minister will visit the Soviet Union. He plans to take with him a delegation of business people who are keen to identify commercial opportunities. While some of them will find a ready market for Canadian products, many will be looking to the longer term. They will be particularly interested in areas which are likely to enjoy greater freedom to make economic decisions and already have skilled labour forces and a strong work ethic. They should be encouraged to look to the Baltic States.

President Gorbachev has shown increasing understanding of the necessity to permit the countries of East Europe to find their own way. In the case of Poland, we have every reason to rejoice in such a decision. That country's problems will not end now that a partially democratic election has been held. But it is already apparent that the people have a new sense that, just maybe, there is hope that the Party will share power with the people and that a way can be found out of the political and economic dilemma which has faced the country for so many years.

The decision by the Party in Hungary to permit multiparty elections offers hope for that country as well.

Canada and the West will have to seek creatively new methods of encouraging those trends in East European countries which offer a real chance for the people to participate in the decision-making process. At the same time, we must stimulate other East European countries whose leaderships have not yet inhaled the reform spirit to acknowledge that the world has changed and they are out of step.

Canada has played a constructive role in creating the atmosphere of reduced East-West tensions which in turn has contributed to greater freedoms in the USSR, in the Baltic States, and in East Europe. Whether on arms control issues, confidence building, Alliance building, or in the CSCE process, the voice of Canada carries weight and conviction. We have a reputation for telling frankly those countries in the Warsaw Pact whose human rights record is wanting, that they cannot be fully accepted as reliable members of the international community until they live up to their commitments.

But we now face a new situation. Some Warsaw Pact countries are beginning to make such substantial changes that we are obliged to rethink our relationship with them. We do not forget the human rights concerns which remain to be satisfied; we do not forget the aspirations of nationalities such as those you represent. But we must recognize change where chance has occurred. We must seek new ways to strengthen the processes already under way. We must encourage the Soviet Union and its neighbours to realize that their best interests are served by living within a family of nations, where people are ruled by governments of their own choosing, associated freely according to their own identified national interests.