

Statement

Discours

Department of
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Ministère des
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SPEAKING NOTES

FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,

AT THE DINNER FOR THE SECRETARY OF

EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF MEXICO

MARCH 28, 1988

OTTAWA

March 31, 1988.

Secretary of State
for
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État
aux
Affaires extérieures

Canada

Honoured guests, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, It gives me great pleasure this evening to welcome Bernardo Sepulveda and Ana Sepulveda to Ottawa.

I first met Bernardo Sepulveda shortly after I took over my present job. In our many meetings since then, I have highly valued his thoughtful, compassionate and articulate views on many of the problems we are facing today. As an advocate for Mexico's own national interests and as a respected proponent of Latin American issues, he has helped to shape my focus on the region.

His vision and foresight were behind Mexico's prominent role in founding the group of eight Latin American countries as a vehicle for broad consultation among themselves. That Group emerged from the Contadora process, in which Mexico played a central role and which has been a signal force in the search for peace in Central America.

The conflict in Central America has anguished all inhabitants of this hemisphere and elsewhere.

Our hopes for peace and accommodation in that turbulent region were justifiably uplifted last August by the Arias Peace Plan. The creation of that Peace Accord was a unique achievement, born of the region and unanimously endorsed by the five Central American leaders. Its principal inspiration, Oscar Arias Sanchez, was duly recognized in Oslo last December where he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

The road to peace since then has been an arduous one, at times appearing almost impassable. Last week our hopes for peace were rekindled by the ceasefire pact concluded in the small Nicaraguan town of Sapoa. We were all heartened by that news and by the sight of Contra and Sandinista leaders together, joining in the singing of their national anthem.

But the challenge of securing a lasting peace is still daunting. Political will alone will not suffice.

The root economic disorder there has to be addressed, the fragile peace process has to be carefully nurtured.

Canada is prepared to be part of the solution in Central America.

Despite some criticism at home, we have provided economic assistance to each of the five countries.

We have offered our unparalleled expertise in peacekeeping, one refined in nineteen international operations - in Indo-China, Cyprus, the Sinai, on the Golan Heights and elsewhere - to design the peacekeeping and verification mechanisms needed to maintain any peace.

An all-party committee of our House of Commons will be visiting the five Central American countries in April, to advance the peace process.

In addition, we would be prepared to apply our expertise within a particular country, if that were agreed by the five nations to be consistent with the Arias Plan.

Tonight, as we meet here, the Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney, is being honoured by an Award from the Americas Society in New York. That event and Secretary Sepulveda's visit following our consultations with the group of eight Latin American countries in Montreal earlier today, mark the importance of Latin America in Canada's foreign policy.

Earlier today, in Montreal, I had the pleasure of hosting a meeting with Secretary Sepulveda and our colleagues from the group of eight Latin American democracies. There we discussed a range of issues across a wide political and economic agenda: the global economic outlook, the multilateral trade negotiations, international debt, agricultural trade reform, as well as prospects for the consolidation of democracy in Latin America and for the peace process in Central America. These are the issues that currently challenge our hemisphere.

The global economy is moving through a period of transition. There is apprehension about the prospects for continued growth, about our ability to control inflation and to deal with debt.

But we are not impotent victims of circumstances. We can and must take control of the future. Recent arrangements whereby Mexico was able to reduce its external debt show that with imagination and determination we can look positively towards the future.

In the past year, both Canada and Mexico have independently entered into agreements to strengthen trade relations with the United States. These agreements reflect our mutual interest in the goal of trade liberalization, an objective that is so important in these times of uncertainty and protectionism. But we must complement these bilateral agreements with a more broadly based multilateral thrust aimed at expanding global trade.

Towards this end, we are working with Mexico and others to ensure progress in the Uruguay Round of the Multilateral Trade Negotiations under the GATT.

It is significant that this round of negotiations was launched, for the first time in a developing country and one in Latin America.

Moreover, for the first time, Mexico is one of our negotiating partners in this forum. We are pleased that in making its courageous and difficult step to join the GATT in 1986, Mexico saw fit to draw upon Canadian experience.

Bernardo Sepulveda has visited Canada three times over the last years and I have been to Mexico twice during this period. These visits reflect the importance and diversity of Canada's relationship with Mexico.

Indeed, as I look around this room the intensity and breadth of our interests are reflected in the impressive number of colleagues, heads of Canadian companies, provincial governments, academic institutions, business associations and government agencies who have joined us to honour you and your country.

Let me give you a sense of the richness and depth of the ties which have developed between Canada and Mexico since we established formal diplomatic relations some 44 years ago.

Canadian exports to Mexico increased more rapidly in 1987 than to any other country in the region, and two-way trade, at \$1.7 billion, was our largest with any Latin American country.

Some 160 Canadian companies have established joint ventures in Mexico.

Almost half a million Canadian tourists travel annually to Mexico while 50,000 Mexicans visit Canada each year.

We have exchanges of young technicians and Mexican agricultural workers come each year to supplement seasonal shortages of labour on Canadian farms.

In addition, there are frequent meetings between our Parliamentarians. One of these annual events will be held shortly in Canada.

These and other exchanges in areas such as films and the performing arts, amount to a constant flow of people and ideas and information between our countries, building mutual respect and understanding.

The momentum behind this thriving relationship, involving both public and private initiative, is supported by a joint ministerial committee and frequent consultations between ministers and senior officials. The state visit to Canada by President de la Madrid in 1984 emphasized the importance of dialogue at the highest level between our two countries.

I am determined that the bonds between our countries will continue to strengthen. This visit by Secretary Sepulveda will impart new momentum to the relationship.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I propose a toast to the distinguished Secretary of External Relations of the United Mexican States and to the continued close relationship between our two countries.