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CANADA AND LATIN AMERICA -- THE PRESENT JUNCTURE

An Address by Mr. Jean-Pierre Goyer, Parliamentary Secretary to the Secretary of State for External Affairs, at the Inaugural Meeting of the Canadian Association for Latin American Studies, York University, Toronto, June 12, 1969.

In the context of the review of Canada's external policy now under way, especially that part of the review concerned with Canada's relations with Latin America, I find it wholly appropriate that an organization such as the Canadian Association for Latin American Studies should be created, since these special circumstances provide it with a natural objective: to increase mutual knowledge between Canada and Latin America and to establish machinery towards that end. Although your organization is but a few hours old, it represents both a remarkable pool of knowledge and a means whereby that knowledge can be put to use. For its part, the Government has pooled its experience with a view to drawing up its future Latin American policy. I am, therefore, very happy, this evening, to be able to establish a link between these two initiatives, by attempting to trace the broad outlines of our relations with Latin America since 1945 and to indicate some basic elements which will guide us in the formulation of our new policy....

In dealing with the topic of relations between Canada and Latin America as they exist at the moment, and their evolution since 1945, I must first recognize that, from an objective viewpoint, they have perhaps not been as much in the forefront of our international preoccupation as they should be. It is obvious, also, that our relations with the United States, our very powerful neighbour, inevitably concern us more than our relations with countries south of the Rio Grande. It is also clear that our ties with Europe and the countries of the Commonwealth have, in general, been closer or more closely developed than those with Latin America. More recently still, the ties created with French-speaking countries have assumed proportions which, in a few respects, go beyond the present development of our relations with Latin America. From a purely geographical point of view, it could even be said that sometimes events in Asia or Africa attract the attention of Canadians more than those in the southern half of our Hemisphere. Nevertheless, one must admit that Canada is now closer to Latin America than it was 25 years ago, and I believe that this evolution will be accelerated from now on. This, in summary, is the present state of our relations with Latin America, in comparison with our relations with other parts of the world.

Let us now examine the evolution of our relations with Latin America since 1945.

Canada's Geopolitical Situation

From the point of view of our geopolitical situation, one would assume, at first glance, that Canada would have long since drawn closer to the countries of Latin America. In fact, we share the American continent with these countries; in principle. Canada and the Latin American countries defend the same political ideals -- that is, those expressed in the Charter of the OAS. Nevertheless, up to the present time, geopolitical forces have had the reverse effect.

Paradoxically, the main reason for this state of affairs is the special geographic position of the United States. The latter country is obviously the dominating geopolitical force in this Hemisphere and its influence is felt both to the north and to the south. Yet its relations with these two regions have developed separately, and in different directions. Similarly, both of these regions have a special relation with the United States, but this relation binds the region concerned to the United States rather than to the region at the other extremity of the Hemisphere. For this reason, one can say that the United States has been a geographical entity -- one might almost say a geopolitical entity -- separating Canada from Latin America.

I should add, in passing, that, if one considers the political systems of Canada and Latin America, the difference which does, in fact, exist between our system and that of most Latin American countries has been an element of neutrality in the development of our relations with these countries. In general, we have adopted the most correct and, perhaps, the easiest attitude, the attitude that their choice of systems of government is entirely their own affair, and they have granted us the same consideration. Perhaps this has not drawn us any closer to these countries but, up to the present, it has not separated us from them either.

There is another major reason why geopolitical forces have not yet brought Canada and Latin America much closer together: in the past, the political interests of Canada and those of Latin American countries did not follow the same line. Since their liberation a century and a half ago, the countries of Latin America have maintained cultural links with Spain and Portugal, and European immigration has played an important role in their development. Nevertheless, these countries have been forced to center their preoccupations on the solution of their internal problems and the affairs of the Hemisphere. As I shall mention later, the Canadian people's involvement in international affairs is a fairly recent phenomenon. Despite this, Canada has always been relatively open to the outside world, either for historical or internal reasons, or because of the need to counterbalance the influence of the United States.

As a result of technological changes since the Second World War, the geopolitical gap between Canada and Latin America has narrowed. Aviation and telecommunications have greatly facilitated contacts between the various parts of the Western Hemisphere, and between this Hemisphere and the rest of the world. Canadians are showing a greater interest in the affairs of this Hemisphere than they did in the past; at the same time, the people of Latin

America are becoming more interested in world affairs. This interest on the part of the people is reflected at the government level. I was one of the members of the ministerial mission which visited nine Latin American countries at the end of last year; during these visits, the Secretary of State for External Affairs and myself were struck by the willingness of the ministers of foreign affairs of these countries to talk with us about several aspects of the situation in the Hemisphere and by their great eagerness to discuss in depth current international problems.

It seems obvious to me that co-operation in the discussion of political problems within the United Nations and some of its agencies is one of the reasons for the political rapprochement which has taken place between Canada and the countries of Latin America. I shall go into the fundamentals of this aspect of the question later on.

My way of conclusion on the geopolitical aspect proper, I should like to mention here the development of our bilateral relations during the past quarter of a century. Between 1941 and 1961, Canada established diplomatic relations with each of the 20 countries of Latin America. At present, Canadian diplomatic missions are located in 14 of these countries. These facts are indicative of a growing mutual interest between the Canadian Government and the governments of these countries. I am sure that this mutual interest will continue to develop in the future.

The necessity of having well-structured relations between the Latin American countries and Canada is, therefore, no longer questioned, and henceforth we can take for granted that the evolution of these relations, particularly in the political sphere, is going to be accelerated. What is still the object of our studies and our consultations is rather the form that these relations shall take in the future, and the place they shall occupy in the scale of our priorities in relation to other countries.

Economic Relations

Regarding economic relations between Canada and Latin America, I note the same difference as in political relations between the present state of affairs and the future potential. For our country as well as for Latin America, the most pressing long-term economic imperatives are perhaps economic development itself and trade.

Regarding economic development, the position of the Latin American countries is somewhat paradoxical. In the first place, some of these countries are far more advanced economically than the others. This gap has long existed for some of them. At the same time, in many of these countries, there are, on the one hand, striking economic development, fully comparable to that of the most advanced countries, and, on the other hand, very serious economic and social problems which affect a wide segment of the population. It is to these problems that the governments of these countries are increasingly turning their attention, and it is, of course, for them to make the necessary decisions, which in certain cases are of immediate urgency.

Certain elements of the Canadian private sector are fairly active in Latin America, where there have long been private capital investments of sizeable importance, especially in mines and public services. Canadian banks operate there and groups of Canadian engineers and consulting engineers are increasingly active in these countries.

More recently, the Canadian Government took a modest step towards real co-operation with the governments of the Latin American countries in the field of economic development. Since 1964, Canada has each year allocated \$10 million to the Inter-American Development Bank. This amount forms part of the long-term loans which the Bank grants to member countries in order to help them carry out certain development projects. The Canadian Government has the right to approve the projects financed with Canadian funds. This effort is worthwhile but hardly sufficient, if one considers that the amount which Canada contributes each year to help the economic development of Latin America represents only about 3 per cent of the money earmarked by Parliament for external aid. We fully understand the situation. In the field of economic development, we wish to co-operate with the countries of Latin America as much as possible in the future and we are now studying the most practical ways of doing it.

In another area, one related to trade -- that is, the field of export credits -- the Canadian Government has been very active in Latin America in comparison to other parts of the world. Of a total of approximately \$400 million granted for credits to foreign countries in recent years, about \$150 million has been directed toward Latin American countries.

I have already said that trade is unquestionably one of the oldest and one of the most effective ties between Canada and Latin America. The total value of our commercial exchanges exceeded \$965 million in 1968, more than 11 times the figure for 1941. Nevertheless, placed within the context of our world trade, this value represents only 3.8 per cent of our total trade for the year 1968 and, incidentally, indicates a balance in our favor. We sell more to most of these countries individually than they sell collectively on our market. These statistics clearly illustrate the real difficulties which these countries experience in increasing to a satisfactory level their exports to Canada. We are ready to provide our advice, as far as possible, to help them increase their output. In return, one must realize that the exportation of traditional Canadian products to Latin America will from now on have to face the free-trade area customs arrangements which are presently being established in these countries. Canada, while attempting to retain a fair share of the market for the exporters of these products, must also seek to ensure that exports of other kinds, such as the equipment needed for economic development, are given a place in our trade with Latin America.

It is evident that there is a place for closer relations with Latin America in the economic field. Canada can play an important role in the economic development of Latin American countries, not only through the Canadian International Development Agency and the Export Credit Insurance Corporation but also through the investment of capital and the various efforts of private groups. I see two main ways in which this role can be fulfilled: in the first place, through the financing which the Canadian Government could usefully provide in the future; and secondly, by making use of the experience of Canadians who have already had to deal with problems similar to those which Latin Americans must face at the present time.

In the area of commerce, it would be possible to enlarge our bilateral trade, not to mention the beneficial results we could achieve by working together within certain international bodies to improve the conditions of sale abroad for certain products, particularly those of the developing countries.

The recent decision to put into effect immediately all the tariff reductions which Canada negotiated during the Kennedy Round represents a step forward in this general direction on the part of the Canadian Government. This decision was made public in the budget, as was the Government's new system of customs exemptions for tourists returning to Canada, a measure which could benefit some Latin American countries. These two measures are a consequence of our development policies towards these countries. It would be unrealistic on our part to expect to contribute to the industrial development of these countries if we do not open our consumer markets to their products.

In short, even though economic relations between Canada and Latin America are not yet of capital importance, and even though there are real difficulties to overcome, closer relations are indeed possible and would be of advantage to both sides.

Cultural and Personal Ties

In the not-so-distant past, Canadian motivation with regard to international problems was far more the result of government initiative than of marked personal interest. The attitude of the average Canadian toward the outside world was very similar to the attitude toward Latin America for which we may be blamed today. Preoccupied with our own affairs, we did not in those days seek to become greatly involved in world problems. Though Canada participated in two world wars, it was only in the forties that a change in our people's basic attitude toward international affairs could really be noticed. This movement was first in the direction of our traditional external relations or, in other words, our relations with the United States, Europe and the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, Canadian attention to international affairs also grew as Canada took new initiatives in which our participation resulted from the force of external circumstances, from our responsibilities toward the United Nations, or from Canada's internal situation.

It is only relatively recently that the majority of Canadians have become truly aware of Latin America and of the importance which that part of the world has for Canada. Of course, there had long been Canadians who had felt drawn toward Latin America. I am thinking of people from all parts of Canada who have become interested in Latin America for one reason or another and also, in particular, of French-Canadians, for whom this region was made more attractive by its cultural affinity.

This interest has also more recently coincided with the need which French-Canadians feel to draw closer to other people of Latin background, more particularly to those of the French-speaking world.

This spontaneous interest on the part of French Canadians, and also that of many English-speaking Canadians, is important in cultural terms. The tendency of Canadians to consider Latin American culture a source of enrichment should be encouraged. The fact remains, however, that, in general, Latin American culture is little known in Canada, even though, with certain exceptions, this culture is remarkably rich, both in its classic and in its contemporary works. The

parallel which I have been trying to draw in other contexts is valid here again, for, if Latin American culture has not received all the attention it should in our country, similarly our culture is only slightly known in Latin America. With the exception of the ancient culture of Canadian Indians, linked with that of the natives of the southern part of the American continent, our artistic and literary productions have not succeeded very much in crossing the borders of the Latin American states.

On the whole, the internal situation of our country at the present time seems quite favourable to a cultural rapprochement with Latin America. Like the people of Latin America, most Canadians are the inheritors of Christian traditions and the Graeco-Roman civilization; and like them we attach importance to maintaining ties with Europe. If one adds to that a certain adventurousness which expresses itself externally in a desire to explore and draw closer to many parts of the world -- a tendency notable among the young --, one finds a solid basis for closer relations with Latin America.

As is the case for other parts of the world, there are some aspects of our cultural relations with Latin America that are especially important. I am thinking, in particular, of exchanges on the intellectual plane, university and scientific exchanges, and more generally of the personal contacts which are favoured by personnel exchanges of all kinds. In these fields, and in the field of artistic exchanges, there is a legitimate government role to be played, and we are now studying the possibility of closer co-operation on our part.

Finally, it should be noted that the public information disseminated in both directions -- toward Canada from Latin America and vice versa -- is scanty. We are far better informed about the situation in the United States or about events in other corners of the world than we are about what is actually going on in Latin America. Fortunately, there is some tendency on the part of newspapers and other media to improve this situation. On our side, for example, the CBC's International Service is effectively broadcasting in Latin America information about Canada, and it disseminates some Canadian culture. Nevertheless an effort must be made to further improve this situation if we are to remedy the obvious lack of information between two major parts of the same continent....

International Security

Canada's relations with Latin America in the realm of international security are indirect rather than direct. Since the Second World War, Canada's role in this field has assumed a threefold aspect: in the first place, an alliance with the United States for the defence of North America; secondly, as a member of NATO, our participation in agreements concerning the safety and stability of the North Atlantic world; and thirdly, under the auspices of the United Nations, our active co-operation in the effort to keep world peace. By this triple association, Canada up to now has contributed to world security and thus, indirectly, to the peace and stability of our Hemisphere.

America's security was only once subjected to external threat -- at the time of the Cuban crisis in 1962 -- and Canada was implicated through its obligations for the defence of North America. As you know, this crisis was actually settled by the two great powers involved. Normally, however, problems of Hemispheric security are looked after by the United Nations or by the OAS, of which Canada is not a member. This is why Canada has no direct responsibility

for regional security in the Western Hemisphere as a whole. It should nevertheless be emphasized that our obligations with regard to international security and our participation in the United Nations enable us to make a positive contribution, even if it is indirect, to the stability of Latin America.

Institutionalization of International Relations

Like most other countries, Canada belongs to a large number of international organizations; international affairs tend more and more to be discussed and even settled within these organizations. It is within these bodies that Canada, since 1945, has had some of its most fruitful contacts with the countries of Latin America. These contacts have occurred mainly at meetings of the United Nations and within several of its bodies, in particular the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the International Law Commission, the Commission on Human Rights, the International Labor Office, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Committee on Disarmament and the Economic Commission for Latin America, to which Canada has belonged since 1961.

Even though we have noticed in the deliberations of these bodies that our interests and outlook differ somewhat from those of Latin Americans, there is nevertheless a much broader field of action in which co-operation exists and this could be enlarged. As I have just said, this was also the impression of the Canadian ministerial mission which recently visited Latin America.

There is also an international institution to which the countries of Latin America and the United States belong. Canada, on the other hand, is not a member. I am speaking, of course, of the Organization of American States, the OAS, the leading organization of our Hemisphere. Its membership includes two independent countries of the Caribbean -- Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago; Jamaica has also just applied for membership. Why, then has Canada never taken the necessary steps to take its place with most of the other countries of the Hemisphere within this organization?

Generally speaking, it would seem that the imperatives which impelled Canada to join similar organizations -- NATO, for example -- have not yet made themselves felt in the case of the OAS. Also, most Canadians are not very well informed about the OAS and, among those who know it well, there are a few who are convinced that Canada ought to become a member while others are distrustful and hence opposed to membership.

If one goes a little more deeply into the arguments involved, one would have to admit that Canada, by joining the OAS, would be taking an unequivocal stand at the side of the countries of the Hemisphere and would, at one stroke again, gain a voice in Hemispheric deliberations on political, economic and social affairs, and in questions of collective security. On the other hand, the history of the Organization, in particular its evolution during the past few years, and also the parallel evolution of co-operation among member countries of the OAS should be considered.

The Organization of American States was founded under its present charter in 1949, but it has existed in other forms since the last half of the nineteenth century. In its origin, the OAS was essentially a rational arrangement of relations between the Latin American countries themselves, and between these countries

and the United States. In 1949, these relations had existed since the liberation of most of the countries of Latin America; they had been characterized both by serious problems and by ever-increasing co-operation. Toward the end of the Second World War, the countries of Latin America and the United States, inspired by the same spirit which had prompted the creation of the United Nations, in which they played an important role, decided to regularize their own relations by signing two regional agreements. The first, the Inter-American Treaty for Reciprocal Assistance, the "Rio Treaty", was signed in 1947; the second, the Charter of the OAS, was signed in 1949.

Canada, wishing to avoid a renewal of the two world wars into which it had been drawn, participated actively in the preparatory work leading to the creation of the United Nations and became a member of this body. However, preoccupied with its own interests, and particularly with its relations with those parts of the world to which it was linked by history, and preoccupied also by its new responsibilities within the United Nations, Canada did not find sufficient reason to join the OAS. I might point out in passing, however, that our country became a member of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America in 1966, and that we have since taken an active part in its work.

The OAS -- and the whole inter-American system of which it is the central part -- have evolved greatly since 1949, especially with regard to activities designed to improve the economic and social conditions of member countries. The Alliance for Progress and the Inter-American Development Bank for Economic Development, the latter established outside the framework of the OAS but composed exclusively of member countries, are the most important instruments from this point of view.

There are also several OAS bodies which are concerned with technical aid and methods to be used in agriculture and other areas of the same nature. Under the new OAS charter, adopted in 1967 but not yet ratified by all member countries, the Inter-American Economic and Social Council and the Inter-American Cultural Council will be given much broader mandates than those they have had up to now. For a long time, there have been several other inter-American organizations outside the OAS dealing with a great variety of questions, which include technical, administrative and cultural matters.

Furthermore, there have been set up recently, again outside the framework of the OAS, agencies or organizational plans, on a scale surpassing even the organizations which I have just mentioned. These are organizations or regional associations formed by some of the Latin American countries: the Latin American Free Trade Association, the Central American Common Market, the Andean Group and the River Plate Group. In addition, there is a plan for a common market of all Latin American countries, theoretically to be formed before 1985.

Canada has not remained indifferent to these developments. In 1961, a Canadian minister attended the meeting of the Inter-American Economic and Social Council as an observer. The Alliance for Progress was launched on this occasion and since that time a Canadian observer regularly has been sent to the Council's meetings and, more recently, to those of the Inter-American Cultural Council, which are held simultaneously. Both bodies are now meeting in Port-of-Spain,

with our Ambassadors to Mexico City and Buenos Aires heading the Canadian delegations. Since last year, the Canadian Government has also been sending an observer to some of the annual meetings of the Alliance's Executive Committee; during these meetings, the progress achieved by those members which are developing countries is reviewed. As I have already explained, Canada has been contributing to the operations of the Inter-American Development Bank since 1964. Moreover, our country belongs to some inter-American technical organizations; these bodies, which may be joined by countries that are not members of the OAS, are not all dependent on the OAS. They have rather varied interests -- for example, the operation of central banks, statistics, taxation methods, broadcasting, postal services and the continent's history and geography. There are also Canadians who participate, either individually or as members of groups, in the activities of several non-official inter-American organizations. Finally, the Canadian Government, through its embassies in Latin American countries, is following with a great deal of interest the evolution of the regional and intergovernmental groups, especially as they affect trade and economic development.

All this is obviously no more than a modest effort, carried out within a multilateral framework, toward more effective co-operation with the countries of Latin America. We could follow up this co-operation by becoming a member of the OAS.

From several points of view, the OAS is an admirable association. Of course, this Organization is not without its weaknesses. It seems to me that it has not always achieved its desired objectives nor always used the appropriate means according to the circumstances. It has done a great deal in the past to preserve the peace of the Hemisphere and to provide this region of the world with a stability and a cohesion which it would not have had otherwise. As the present time, the OAS is in a period of transition. The new charter still has to be ratified. The new Secretary-General, Mr. Galo Plaza, a most distinguished Latin American statesman, is most remarkable in his efforts.

It remains to be determined whether the Canadian Government will decide that the time is now favourable for applying to join the OAS, or whether it will feel that our country should first take suitable measures to effect closer relations with the countries of Latin America and to increase its knowledge of Latin American affairs before reaching a decision on the more fundamental issue.

Conclusion

In this review of the principal aspects of our relations with Latin America as they have existed in the past and as they exist in the present, I have also tried to give you some idea of the future of these relations as foreseen at the present time. To make this part of my remarks a bit clearer, I should like to recall what the Prime Minister said before the departure of the ministerial mission last year. He stated, among other things: "The Government considers our relations with the countries in this Hemisphere as being of high priority." Farther on, he added: "I am confident that this review (the review of policy then being undertaken) will demonstrate that there is real scope for strengthening Canada's relations with Latin America to the mutual advantage of both."

The review of policy toward Latin America is now well advanced. We in Government are grateful to those of you who have given us valuable advice, either through correspondence or by taking part in the seminar held in Scarborough, a few weeks ago, or otherwise. I hope that, if you have other ideas, you will not hesitate to let us know....

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