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STATEMENTS AND SPEECHES

Speech by

The Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for External Affairs,
at a luncheon hosted by the
Council on Foreign Relations

Canada

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INTRODUCTION

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark, today delivered a keynote foreign policy address on South Africa to the prestigious Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

This is the first major speech on the subject by Mr. Clark since the South African election on September 6.

The speech clearly spells out the Canadian Government's agenda on this issue leading up to the Commonwealth heads of Government meeting in Kuala Lumpur from October 18 to 24. Specifically, the speech outlines the rationale for Canadian policy towards South Africa, describes the circumstances surrounding this pivotal moment in the region's history and outlines practical suggestions on how the international community can encourage the process of substantial reform.

Mr. Clark will accompany Prime Minister Mulroney to this summit, and will submit a report to the meeting as Chairman of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Minister.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This has been a week of important developments in East-West relations, and especially arms control. And, in Canada-US relations, this has been a year in which history has been changed, particularly with the Free Trade Agreement, but also respecting the progress we are making together to control acid rain. More generally, the world is in the midst of an extraordinarily productive period in international affairs - in Afghanistan, in Indochina, in the Gulf, in southern Africa, in Central America, in Lebanon, there is real movement on problems that, not long ago, had seemed intractable. In Hungary, in Poland, in the Soviet Union itself, systems and assumptions are being turned on their head.

In one way or another, Canada is involved in all these issues.

Against this background, it may seem unusual that a Canadian Foreign Minister would come before the Council on Foreign Relations to talk about apartheid, a system we have all condemned for decades, in a country almost literally at the other end of the world.

We start from a premise with which few would disagree - that it is an unacceptable affront to civilized values to deny fundamental rights to large segments of a population because of their colour.

But there is an abundance of evil and injustice in the world, and the Government of Prime Minister Mulroney chose deliberately to put Canada in the front lines of the battle against apartheid.

I would like to outline today the rationale for that policy; describe what I believe is a pivotal moment in the history of the region; and offer some thoughts on how we in the West can further encourage the process of reform.

The protection and advancement of human rights around the world is a central element of Canadian foreign policy.

It has been a priority of our Prime Minister from the beginning - whether in China, the Eastern Bloc, Central America, Zimbabwe, or Korea. He secured the adoption by the 44 Members of La Francophonie of their first formal Declaration concerning human rights.

Our concern for human rights is not merely a moral judgment. It also reflects a deeply held belief that prosperity and social stability are firmly anchored only by freedom, and that tyranny is ultimately a recipe for chaos and poverty.

That is a proper pursuit for a Western democracy which has been blessed with the fruits of freedom. It is also natural for a nation of immigrants, many of whom know only too well the withering burden of oppression. For Canadians, as for Americans, the defence of human rights is an obligation of a free people.

But the fight against apartheid has been an element of Canadian foreign policy not simply because the cause is so compelling. Canada has also believed that this is a question where we can make a difference.

That is because Canada enjoys a good and strong relationship with South Africa's black neighbours. We do not carry the colonial baggage of some other Western countries. We are active members of the Commonwealth, La Francophonie and the G-7 - in fact the only country to belong to all of these groups. That is important where co-operative action is the most effective force for change.

The role of the Commonwealth in the fight against apartheid has been central. It has been in the vanguard, as it was in setting the framework for the evolution of Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. Its membership is global and multi-racial. It is well representative of the African region. It crosses the line between the developed and the developing world.

The Commonwealth has been important in two crucial respects. First, it has put the apartheid issue on the international agenda. Without the leadership of the Commonwealth, I think it is fair to say that the world community's focus on South Africa would be weaker and far less coherent.

Second, and just as important, the Commonwealth has acted as an on-going forum for reasoned dialogue. Through the process of formulating policies and designing courses of action, an invaluable and unique exchange of views has enriched the understanding of all its members. Rigidities and unrealistic stances have been avoided. The result has been an integrated strategy to both put pressure on South Africa and to encourage - in a positive sense - dialogue and compromise between the parties.

In 1985, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau set the agenda for international action on South Africa. An agreed package of sanctions was adopted and the Eminent Persons Group was created. Seven leading citizens from five continents - a former Prime Minister of Australia, a former President of Nigeria, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer of a Conservative Government in Great Britain, a former President of the World Council of Churches from the Bahamas, and Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Canada, - spent four months in Africa, speaking to all sides, seeking a peaceful solution. Their Report defined a negotiating concept that would lead to peaceful acceptable change. Unfortunately, on the day these Eminent Persons returned to Cape Town, the South African Government bombed the headquarters of the African National Congress in Lusaka, and the hope of negotiations was stalled. The next Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver in 1987 established a Committee of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers which has since served to provide an on-going forum for considered debate and to refine the Commonwealth's approach. The October Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Kuala Lumpur this year will provide an important opportunity to review the aftermath of the elections in South Africa and to consider new means by which the process of reform can be made inevitable.

Since the 1985 Commonwealth meeting, no country has adopted more measures designed to end apartheid and encourage dialogue than has Canada - over 50 distinct steps. These have ranged from financial and trade sanctions to assistance programs for the education of blacks; from a ban on sporting contacts to support to the Front Line States; from an embargo on the import of South African arms to support for workshops and conferences which have brought together South Africans of all races.

The purpose of Canadian policy has been clear and constant: to convince South Africa that it must abolish the system of apartheid. From the outset, this has dictated the specific approach we have taken.

That approach was based on a recognition the change would not come without pressure, and that pressure is most effective if exerted collectively, and steadily.

Simply expressing our disapproval would accomplish little with a regime so entrenched, so convinced, and so fearful that change would cost them everything. Indeed, for twenty-five years, Western countries spoke loudly against apartheid, but carried a small stick, and the system did not change. It was only when nations together began to impose sanctions that the seriousness of the opposition to apartheid became clear. Some Canadians have argued that we should have imposed full sanctions, and totally ended our diplomatic relations. The view of our government has been that a total rupture of that kind should only occur when all else had failed and the avenues to peaceful change had been closed.

Had we ended totally our relationship with South Africa, our influence would have expired with the one burst of emotion. Our ability to assist apartheid's foes inside South Africa would have been sharply diminished if our Embassy had been closed. Our capacity to monitor events would have disappeared. Our influence with our friends to mount joint pressure would have been weakened.

Our aim has been to promote change; it has not been to punish. And those measures we have adopted have had as their goal a change of behaviour. Decades of prejudice cannot be erased overnight, just as the power structure will not transform itself in an instant.

Therefore, we have pursued an approach of consistent and constant pressure designed to induce a process of peaceful change in South Africa.

We have had disagreements with others, notably the United Kingdom, on the effectiveness of sanctions. Their position, described briefly, has been that sanctions do not work and that they hurt those most in need. Our position has been that sanctions are necessary to convince the South African regime that change is necessary. Words won't work, but targeted pressure will, and there is no better target than the pocket book.

However, our policy also recognized that while sanctions were necessary, they were not sufficient. Therefore, we also emphasized positive measures to increase understanding. We have funded the efforts at dialogue, including conferences between moderates on both sides. We have provided assistance to the Front Line States to help them become more independent of South Africa. We have moved to counter the pernicious censorship and propaganda of Pretoria. We will continue to do so.

And we have pursued this policy with others, recognizing that on this issue there is no better approach than one of concerted action.

What have been the results of our efforts?

To begin with, we can state without equivocation that sanctions have worked - particularly financial sanctions. The ban on new loans and the renegotiation of debt for progressively shorter periods at higher rates hurts the South African economy. Scarce capital is syphoned off. Growth is stunted. Business confidence is weakened. The ability of Pretoria to fund its extraordinarily expensive security apparatus is shaken.

The effect of sanctions was recognized by the former Governor of the Reserve Bank of South Africa, the late Gerhard de Kock, when he stated in May, before his resignation, that South Africa was "bleeding". He warned that "if adequate progress is not made in political and constitutional reform, South Africa's relationships with the rest of the world are unlikely to improve".

The damaging effect of sanctions is also being recognized at the political level. Former Junior Foreign Minister Kobus Meiring declared in Cape Town in July that "we have to break the isolation to get the money we need for development ... How do we do it? It is as simple as this; we have to make ourselves acceptable".

Law and Order Minister Vlok conceded that same month that "our ability to make decisions is limited. If sanctions are introduced against us we can do nothing ... We do not live alone in this world".

And President de Klerk himself has referred to "the international stangehold which ... is presently inflicted on our economic growth potential".

It is a long way from the recognition of a problem - and its source - to an acceptable response. But it is an important step.

Of course, action by the major US and West European banks will be key. That is why the Commonwealth despatched a group of officials to the current round of debt negotiations to encourage cooperation in this regard, encouraging an elimination of multi-year debt rescheduling, and higher repayment terms over shorter periods.

This delegation - composed of senior officials from Australia, India and Canada - returned on September 22, having spoken to 12 of the 14 major banks involved in rescheduling negotiations with South Africa. They reported a keen interest in their views, and believe that the major banks were influenced by what they had to say. Most banks agreed that they would be seeking the highest possible interest payments and the fastest possible repayment of capital - a function also of their assessment of the deteriorating South African economy.

Pocket books are being hit. It is not a question of convincing the whites in South Africa that change is desirable; it is a question of convincing them that change is necessary.

In short, apartheid must become unaffordable. We are beginning to succeed in this challenge.

So far, the tangible results have been disappointing.

Despite the sweet-sounding promise of reform, it is clear that none of the major instruments of apartheid has yet to be dismantled.

Yet there are new and more positive signs, whispers in the wind, which may or may not be harbingers of a better future.

The settlement in Namibia has been one positive development. Clearly, the South African Government compromised where it had not before. We must await the results of the Namibian elections to form a final judgment. While sceptics might say that South Africa was driven more by a sober assessment of the chances of victory and the mounting death toll and that a settlement in Namibia may have been judged a way to buy time with the international community, the settlement itself was nevertheless welcome.

The South African election has introduced a new dynamic. The number of seats held by the current government has been reduced. The strength of the parties on the right has been bolstered. But so too have the political forces of change and reform.

Although a shift to violence, retrenchment and repression is certainly possible, so too is change.

No one can predict whether the South African Government will follow through on its promise of reform. The violence of election eve does not prompt optimism, nor do the brutal police actions of recent days.

This being said, there are clearly more hopeful signs. The unprecedented peaceful march in Cape Town two weeks ago was welcome. So too were contacts between President de Klerk, Bishop Tutu and Alan Boesak and the talks with President Kaunda of Zambia. Marches and meetings do not constitute reform. But they can be a precursor to it. They may be a symbol that Mr. de Klerk intends to make history.

There are also signs that a new generation of South Africans is seeking change. The University campuses, once quiescent, are now the focus of heated debate and protest. Young, white middle class students are joining with the black majority in calling for fundamental changes.

And the Dutch Reformed Church, one of the bulwarks of Afrikaaner society, has now registered its moral opposition to an apartheid system it once supported. That is bound to have influence on a people proud of their moral standards.

Acceptable change requires active dialogue. Active dialogue requires an acceptance of the legitimacy of each party by the other. Mutual recognition of legitimacy depends on the acceptance of non-violence as the sole mechanism of change. These are the prerequisites of reform.

In this connection, we have been pleased by the moderation in the attitude of the African National Congress. That moderation has been encouraged by Canada, beginning with Prime Minister Mulroney's meeting with Oliver Tambo, the ANC's President in 1987. The ANC now talks about the desirability of peaceful, negotiated change rather than of violent revolution. It accepts, for the first time, the desirability of suspending violence prior to negotiations. It also recognizes that there are other legitimate voices of opposition in South Africa, and that discussion and co-operation with them are possibilities worthy of pursuit.

Allow me to quote from the ANC's recently adopted document providing guidelines and principles for approaching South Africa.

"We believe that a conjuncture of circumstances exists which, if there is a demonstrable readiness on the part of the Pretoria regime to engage in negotiations genuinely and seriously, could meet the possibility to end apartheid through negotiations".

Canada has never been naive about the ANC. In the past, we have disapproved of elements of their approach and criticized their actions.

But we accept their legitimacy. We believe they have now opened the door to serious dialogue. The excuse of a Communist threat is fading, as is the portrait of a black menace fixated only on violence and terror. The ANC's new conditions for negotiations closely mirror those adopted by the Commonwealth. It is now up to the white regime to reciprocate.

The preconditions for meaningful negotiations in South Africa remain as established by the Commonwealth in 1987:

- the lifting of the state of emergency;
- the release of Nelson Mandela and all other political prisoners;
- the unbanning of the ANC and other political parties;
- the mutual suspension of violence.

There is a hope that these steps may be closer to realization than under the previous government.

The real litmus test of the new South African government will be its willingness to negotiate with the legitimate leaders of the black majority.

Until then, pressure should not be lifted. Let that be clear.

Let it also be clear that in the absence of progress of this sort, collective action will increase. Others will join in.

Unless significant progress is made, the US Administration will come under new pressures for further action in the spring. Also let us not forget that Mrs. Thatcher is as opposed to apartheid as she is to sanctions. Her patience too has limits.

The fight against apartheid is not a quixotic exercise in moral diplomacy. It reflects a sober analysis of the economic potential of the southern African region, a potential which has been sadly stunted by apartheid. Some observers point to South Africa as a model of Western economic success in a desert of inefficiency and underdevelopment. While no one would deny the degree of development currently enjoyed by South Africa, we also cannot ignore the fact that the enormous economic costs of apartheid have prevented that country and the region from reaching anywhere near their full capacity. The dual social system of apartheid - apart from being abhorrent - is extremely costly. So too is the massive security apparatus which the regime must support in order to preserve the status quo.

There are rich mineral reserves and other natural resources in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola. These economies are functioning far below capacity. This is partly as a result of the structural weaknesses of the South African economy to which they are so tied, but also because of the foregone benefits of foreign investment. Foreign corporations are not going to rush to invest in societies which are unstable as a result of South African support for rebel movements. Nor are they going to be inclined to invest heavily in economies whose transportation systems are subject to regular interruption by South African-inspired terrorism. I dare say Canada would be far less prosperous place if our rail, air and road networks were subject to periodic and systematic sabotage. So would the United States.

Canada is investing millions of dollars in the development of secure lines of supply for the states to the North of South Africa, lines of supply which connect these economies directly to ocean ports on the African coast. Other countries are doing the same, especially the UK, which has put \$60 millions into rail lines in Mozambique.

The bottom-line here is as follows: A southern Africa plagued by apartheid is a southern Africa which is economically crippled. A southern Africa freed of apartheid would be a southern Africa open to business. Indeed, the transition away from apartheid could trigger the long-sought economic development of the entire, impoverished African continent. This possibility is even more compelling when one looks at the welcome shift already evident in the region towards a market economy, for example in Mozambique.

But there is another point to be made here. The fight against apartheid is also important for the future of relations between the developed and the developing world. To a degree which must not be underestimated, the Third World regards attitudes towards apartheid as a crucial test of our commitment to the values we profess.

The Communist experiment in Africa has been a failure - as it has failed in Eastern Europe and in the USSR. The African continent and countries in other developing regions are open as never before to values and institutions closer to our own. There is a welcome new pragmatism - a new realism which challenges the hackneyed and sterile slogans of failed ideologies.

If we betray the future of a multi-racial South Africa, our ability to sustain reasoned dialogue with the developing world will suffer. Our morals will be judged hollow, mere cant disguising greed and self-interest.

And that will have consequences elsewhere - on the environment, on debt, on drugs, on terrorism.

The search for a realistic global dialogue on those issues where the very survival of the West requires co-operation with the Third World will be dealt a blow.

The atmosphere of the struggle against apartheid has been clouded by emotion - and by the very prejudice which lies at the heart of the problem. There have been too many slogans and too many smug answers; too much distrust and too little dialogue.

But when one clears away the clouds of rhetoric, there is one single, compelling statement of fact. And it is this: for South Africa, there are but two futures.

The first is a South Africa destroyed, impoverished through strife and bloodied by a racial war so horrific that recovery will take decades.

The second future is a South Africa coming to its senses just in time, ushering in an era of multi-racial co-operation. A South Africa which at last joined the rest of the modern world.

Of one thing we can be sure. The present state of affairs cannot persist into the future.

A new clock started ticking on election day, September 6. That the international community is pausing in the aftermath of the election is not a weakening of resolve. The cyclical, historical pattern of increasing and receding pressure on South Africa is over. The pressure is now unyielding. Pretoria must understand that this time, the world demands action.

South Africa will remain on the international agenda as long as it chooses to be. The action or inaction of Pretoria will determine the focus of Canada, the Commonwealth and other states and organizations on apartheid.

It is part of our Western tradition to be optimistic. That is what keeps us striving to improve the global lot. The tragedy of South Africa has been a potent challenge to this optimism.

Despite civilization's best efforts, history is littered with tragedies which, although foreseen, were not prevented. Let us hope that this is not the next example. And let us guide our actions to ensure that a decade hence, we can say we were there, we tried and we prevailed.