

Statement

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NOTES FOR A SPEECH

BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
TO THE UKRAINIAN CANADIAN COMMITTEE-NATIONAL

OTTAWA

October 7, 1988.

Secretary of State  
for  
External Affairs

Secrétaire d'État  
aux  
Affaires extérieures

Canada

It is a privilege for me to be present with you this evening to share in your celebration of 1000 years of Christianity in your ancestral homeland, "Rus'Ukraine". In this millennium year, it is the role of your churches that we especially honour - Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant. They have been a mainstay of Ukrainian culture and spiritual ideals, inside and outside the Ukraine. It is the religious temper of the Ukrainian people which ensures that the vision of human rights and freedom of choice, as ends in themselves, is preserved in the Ukraine today. This 1000th year tradition of Christianity is the proof and guarantee that human hope and faith cannot be extinguished. The whole world celebrates this anniversary of courage and of faith.

Canadian-Ukrainians have left an indelible mark on this country - whether it is John Sopinka on the Supreme Court of Canada, or the legacy of William Kurelek's paintings, or Johnny Bucyk driving for the net. In my own Department, I have had the privilege of appointing Raynell Andreychuk as Canadian High Commissioner to Kenya, and then adding to her many distinctions, that of Canadian Representative to the UN Human Rights Commission.

I applaud the role of the Ukrainian Canadian Committee in encouraging your community to become more active in the Canadian political process. Your new Parliamentary Student Internship Programme is a vital contribution to this end.

You will permit me, as an Albertan, to say that I am not surprised that the foremost centre for Ukrainian studies outside the Ukraine is the Ukrainian Institute at the University of Alberta.

We Canadians are the luckiest people in the world, because we live in a land that is both wealthy and free. Sometimes we take that wealth for granted, and think we can spend without earning, or grow without working. And sometimes we take our freedom for granted, and forget that other countries, other systems, know nothing of the rich freedom we have here.

Let me tell you a brief true story of two capitals, two systems. Just before Easter, in 1985, Maureen and I were in Kiev. I met the Premier of the Ukraine, and asked for the release of a man named Danylo Shumuk. The Premier of the Ukraine said no, and we argued about it. On my return, I pressed the case again, as I had before.

And, last year, Danylo Shumuk was freed, and came to Canada. I met him in Ottawa, and took him to see the House of Commons - our free Parliament. He sat in the Speaker's chair, and as we walked out, I pointed to the seat of prominent Members of Parliament. I showed him the seat of the Opposition Leaders, and then I pointed to the place of the Prime Minister. And Danylo Shumuk said to me: "I know where the Prime Minister sits. He sits next to Mr. Mazankowski."

I asked: "How did you know that?" And he told me that, during his long years in a Soviet prison, his relatives in Canada told him of the opportunities that were open in this free country to the Hnatyshyns' and the Paproskis' and the Mazankowskis'. The contrast was clear. In the Soviet Union, if you were proud of your heritage, like Danylo Shumuk, you went to jail. In Canada, if you were proud of your heritage, like Don Mazankowski, you can become the Deputy Prime Minister of the country. There is a rare quality of freedom in this country, that we have to protect at home, and extend abroad.

At home, we have to work at freedom and equality. We have to recognize that tolerance is the trademark of this free society, and that we guarantee our own rights and traditions by respecting the rights and traditions of others. We are an easy country to divide. One could turn region against region, culture against culture, race against race. Yet the success of Canada - what makes us unique in the world - is that we rise above those divisions, to create a nation in which all our differences are seen as strengths. And the more we succeed in that, the better example we set for the world.

Let me speak for a moment, as your Foreign Minister, of what we can do in the world. First, let me note two changes that give Canada even greater influence if we continue to follow a strong and active foreign policy.

The first change is economic. The world economy is being transformed. The countries of Europe, fierce enemies through centuries, have created a Common Market in which all internal barriers to trade will be gone by 1992. In Asia, Japan casts a wider influence on the world, and modern young economies in Korea, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong become more competitive every day. Think of what will happen when massive countries like India and China become as competitive as Korea and Japan. In North America, Canada has negotiated a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, so that we will have the same market advantages as Europe and Asia, with whom we must compete. This new economic reality holds great opportunities for Canada, because we are so rich, so innovative, so competitive. If we reach out to these opportunities, nothing can stop Canada.

And that economic change is forcing a political change - particularly in the Soviet Union. Part of what is driving Mr. Gorbachev is the undeniable evidence that the Soviet economic system doesn't work. That and other factors have led to a change in the relation between the superpowers. Nothing basic has changed. One system is free and the other is not. But there is now a wider range of practical questions on which we can get agreement - from visitor visas, to the environment, to progress on banning chemical weapons.

And often, in this circumstance, countries like Canada can have a larger influence. Let me mention two priorities of our policy.

One, obviously, is human rights. Respect for human rights is a cornerstone of Canadian foreign policy. Prime Minister Mulroney and I have raised this question directly with governments around the globe - from Korea, to Central America, to Burundi, to South Africa, to the countries behind the Iron Curtain. Just two weeks ago, at the United Nations, I told Mr. Shevardnadze of Canada's continuing concern about human rights in the Soviet Union. We will never stop pressing the Soviet Union to continue to improve its record, including its treatment of religious and national minorities. We believe we are beginning to make a difference, particularly with regard to travel.

In the first half of 1988, our Embassy in Moscow issued 2034 visas to visitors and 84 to immigrants. In the whole of 1986 there were only 676 visits by private citizens to Canada and 33 immigrants from the Soviet Union. Many of you and your families will already have experienced the benefits of those changes. I can assure you we will press for more.

Family reunification is especially important to us. Out of the 42 specific cases I presented in 1987 to Mr. Shevardnadze, 33 have been resolved, including all 6 from the Ukraine. This year our results have been less successful, so I have asked that he personally review our list. For my part, I will continue to do everything I can to help bring families together.

Our Government has amended our own Immigration Regulations to encourage family reunification, and we continue to devote great effort, at home and abroad to resolving outstanding cases. In our discussions with the Soviet Government, this issue is always prominently raised as a serious and permanent concern of the Canadian Government, and a major factor in bilateral relations.

In many ways, the major battleground for human rights is the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Canada plays a leading role in seeking compliance with the commitments of the Helsinki Final Act.

We have deplored the treatment of Helsinki monitors, whose only crime was to take seriously the solemn declarations made by their government. We have called for the release of other political prisoners, and for changes in Soviet law that would no longer make it a punishable offence to criticize the state. We have pressed for recognition of the right of people to monitor their government's observance of commitments and to promote respect for human rights, and for effective remedies for those punished for such action. We are demanding a firmer commitment to the right of everyone to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his own country. We are seeking agreement to a range of measures that would reduce the bureaucratic and other impediments to personal travel, to emigration, and to family reunification and family visits. We have called for guarantees by governments of the integrity and privacy of postal and telephone communications, for freer movement of visitors within their home country including the ability to stay in private homes, and for a freer flow of information of all kinds.

In preparing for CSCE meetings, we have invited many interested Canadians, including Ukrainian-Canadian groups, to provide us with information and views. We shall continue to do so, and I reaffirm an open invitation to contact my officials at any time. Often you, and not governments, are the best source of accurate information as to what is happening in the Soviet Union, particularly regarding the welfare and circumstances of family and friends.

Mr. President, if there is any single characteristic that marks us as members of Canadian society, it is that we are free. Not everyone is free, as Danylo Shumuk can testify. Some systems of government deny freedom for their own people, and would limit it elsewhere. Europe today is divided between countries where citizens are free, and countries where they are not. That difference is based on a struggle between systems - and in that struggle over freedom, Canada is not neutral.

We have fought for freedom in Europe in two World Wars. We welcome refugees and immigrants who come here to be free. We are active influential members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - NATO - and we will continue to be, because the defence of freedom is not finished.

Our presence, with our allies, on the front lines in Europe, is a sign to the West, and a sign to the East, that nations who value freedom will not be divided. Those who would pull Canada out of Europe would abandon Canada's duty and offend Canada's history. That is not the policy of this government.

We are interested in the reforms taking place in the Soviet Union. There has been real movement on a range of issues. But the facts require us to be cautious as well. We must always keep in mind how far the Soviet Union would have to go to give its peoples the palest imitation of what we already enjoy as free citizens of a free nation. We should welcome real change, but we should also ensure that western nations present our side of any debate as aggressively as the Soviet's present there side.

What is important is realism. There has been change. There may be more. It should be encouraged by Canada and other free societies.

We want to be sure the change is real before we celebrate it - and we must, throughout this period, maintain our own commitments to the values of free societies, and the means to keep the peace.

I am honoured to be with you tonight. All my life, it has been my privilege to work closely with Canadians of Ukrainian origin. You are part of my heritage as a Canadian.

In his 1904 poem, Michael Gowda, a Ukrainian pioneer, echoed the Testament of the Ukrainian national poet Taras Schevchenko when he wrote:

"But, Canada, in liberty we work till death,  
Our children shall be free to call thee theirs,  
Their own dear land, where gladly drawing breath,  
Their parents found safe graves, and left strong  
heirs."

Strong heirs, and a priceless understanding of the value of freedom, are among the greatest gifts Ukrainians have given Canada. You do your forefathers proud.