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NOTES FOR A SPEECH BY THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE JOE CLARK,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS,  
TO THE  
CANADA-ISRAEL COMMITTEE

OTTAWA

MARCH 13, 1985

Mr. Chairman,

It is with great pleasure that I have accepted the invitation to speak to you today about our country's relations with the State of Israel. Maureen and I have long admired Israel in both its ancient and modern forms. It is truly a land of miracles. We remember from our childhood the stories of the wisdom of the Kings, David and Solomon, and the words of the prophets. We studied as adults the rich history of the Jewish people and their vital spiritual and cultural gift to all of Western civilization.

We have been strongly impressed by the spirit of idealism that motivated and inspired the pioneers of Israel, the determination to create a society where the individual would be respected. Israel's vibrant democratic institutions and free press attest to the success of these pioneers.

We as Canadians, many of us descendants of pioneers ourselves, living in a young country, understand the place of these ideals in society. We share with Israelis a heritage of common values: freedom, democracy, justice and the rule of law.

This understanding, and the genuine admiration which Canadians have for Israel and its achievements, has been reflected in the longstanding firm commitment of successive Canadian governments, whether Conservative or Liberal, to Israel's security and well being. This has been a basic element in Canadian Middle East policy since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948. It reflects, in a non-partisan manner, the views of Canadians that democratic societies deserve our firm support.

While Canadians and Israelis share many qualities and beliefs in common, there are many geographical and historical differences between us - and perhaps I should add climatic differences as well. Yet many of us know something of the cost and sacrifice to build a nation. We and our forebears have done that here. And we admire those Israelis who drained the marshes and made the desert bloom in the Holy Land.

Yet, as a multi-cultural nation, Canadians understand the difficulties as well as the very real benefits, that history can bestow on a pluralist society. This is, of course, a most appropriate occasion to reiterate the particularly rich contributions - intellectual, political, artistic and economic - made to our cultural mosaic by Canadians of the Jewish faith.

It is to me, as Secretary of State for External Affairs, of utmost importance to seek means to nurture the already strong and growing bilateral relationship between Canada and Israel. It is partly for this reason that I have invited Mr. Shamir, Israel's Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Ottawa as my guest. I had the opportunity to meet with him in New York after

only 8 days in office and we had a good discussion then of international and bilateral issues. We continued that discussion this morning. Nor is he the first Israeli politician to visit Ottawa. In November, I met with Israel's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Navon, as did several of my Cabinet colleagues.

These meetings attest to the mutual commitment of political leaders in both countries to develop and strengthen the relationship. This commitment has been particularly emphasized by Prime Minister Mulroney who has reaffirmed and here I quote his words: "our close historic, democratic ties with Israel and our support for the integrity of Israel".

Even as we and our Israeli friends work to develop our relations, I fully realize that there are many issues of concern to you, the members of Canada's Jewish community. We remember this year the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazism in Europe. Throughout the world people commemorate thankfully the defeat of Fascism and remember respectfully the millions of Jews who died in the Holocaust. Under the auspices of His Excellency the President of the State of Israel, Cnaim Herzog, a World Assembly is being held in Jerusalem to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazism. Prime Minister Mulroney has written to the President and to the delegations at that Assembly on behalf of all Canadians and in tribute to the remembrance of the victims of the Holocaust.

While these memories are painful and bitter, we have cause to look with pride on what has been achieved in these past 40 years, in no small measure thanks to the courage and sacrifice of those who stood so heroically against tyranny and oppression.

You will be aware that the Government has recently set up a commission of inquiry on war criminals to be headed by Quebec Superior Court Justice Jules Deschenes. In the meantime, the Minister of Justice, the Honourable John Crosbie, has assured all Canadians that cases presently under investigation will be pursued vigorously.

This, of course, is very much in keeping with Canada's longstanding efforts to protect the civil rights of Canadians and our practice to speak out forcefully on human rights issues internationally. Last Friday I had the opportunity to address some of these issues at the Conference on the Rights of Minorities held in Quebec City. These are concerns all Canadians share but I recognize that clearly there are particular interests of more general concern to Canadians of Jewish faith. We have seen in the past several months, in two Canadian provinces, trials in courts of law which in themselves and in the circumstances surrounding them may have been unsettling to many. Yet the legacy of our traditions includes respect for the law ensuring that it was indeed in a courtroom where individuals sought redress for their grievances against the activities of others.

On one other issue of concern to you, I know, that of the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union, I wish to tell you that Mr. Shamir and I exchanged views on this matter this morning. We agreed on the gravity of the situation and the need to use every available avenue to urge the Soviet Union to permit the emigration of Jews who wish to leave that country. In that context, I referred to the Experts Meeting on Human Rights, as part of the continuing process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, to be held in Ottawa starting on May 7. This will be the first CSCE meeting exclusively devoted to human rights, and the first held in North America.

With respect to the situation in the Middle East you will be aware of the many developments in that region which all of us who desire peace are watching with great interest. Mr. Shamir and I talked of these issues and if there was not always complete agreement between us we achieved a good understanding of each others views. Canadian government policy has been and remains to support all constructive efforts to move from confrontation to negotiation of regional issues. Canadians welcome Israel's announced intentions to withdraw completely its forces from Lebanon. We hope that Stage III of the planned withdrawal will receive Cabinet support and be implemented.

I reiterated the earnest desire of the Canadian government, despite our modest influence on events in that part of the world, to contribute in any way possible to the search for a lasting peaceful settlement which, as I said at the General Assembly last September, must be based on the legitimate rights of both sides: Israel's to secure and recognized boundaries and the Palestinians right to a homeland within a clearly defined territory, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The importance of the parties to the dispute exploring any possibilities that might emerge for promoting a negotiated settlement cannot be minimized and, in this respect, I have been heartened by the developments of the last few weeks.

A settlement to the Iran-Iraq war, as evidenced by the recent renewed fighting, remains elusive. In this dismal situation, we have been encouraged by the initiatives of the UN Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar, and I was able to tell him so directly last week, in urging both sides to respect international humanitarian law, particularly with respect to the applicability of the Geneva Conventions to this conflict. We have strongly supported him in his efforts and we hope that the recent report of the mission of inquiry to the region will clarify the situation with respect to the treatment of prisoners of war and the adherence to international legal conventions. The Secretary-General's efforts deserve and will continue to have our strong support.

As developments in the region occur, I will continue to express Canada's concerns, whether this be in support of peace initiatives in the Arab-Israeli dispute, on some aspect of the Iran-Iraq war or indeed respecting other issues of concern to Canadians. It is important for Canada's voice to be heard on these fundamental issues. With respect to Canadian policy toward Arab-Israeli issues, I have stressed both to Mr. Shamir and to Arab Foreign Ministers I met in New York in September that there would be continuity in our basic approach and policy.

While our commitment to certain values is unshakeable, we should not remain static in the face of rapidly evolving events in the region. Continuity does not mean stagnation and our positions are, in a sense, always under review.

Furthermore, you will be aware that this government has announced it will undertake a thorough review of Canadian foreign policy and that a Green Paper on foreign policy will soon be released that I expect will set the tone for this much needed review. I wish to assure you, however, as I have stressed elsewhere, that certain fundamental aspects of Canadian policy, including support for Israel's security and well-being, are not subject to change.

However, the world is rapidly changing and I have found that Canadians are anxious to express their views on a redefinition of our place and role in the world. Today more Canadians are interested in foreign policy and are aware of the impact it can have on their daily lives, partly perhaps because the world economy and the nuclear threat force their interest. But I believe that there are also reasons for this that reflect our growth as a country, our renewed economic and cultural self-confidence.

In this respect I have been most pleasantly surprised, by the tremendous and generous response of Canadians to the famine in Africa. This response is a testimony to the interest of ordinary Canadians in their world, their generous spirit and their desire to grasp opportunities to make contributions to resolve problems which concern them. But much more remains to be done.

Jewish Canadians, like others, have contributed fully to this phenomenal response. Naturally, there has been a particular concern, in your community, about the fate of the Ethiopian Jews, who face the threat of both famine and deprivation. We recognize that Ethiopian Jews have a strong preference for resettlement in Israel and that Israel has already done much to receive them. The delicacy of this predicament, however, is aggravated by the danger that publicity makes action more difficult.

It is my hope that the foreign policy review will contribute to making Canadians more aware of our interdependence. We do not want, nor would we be allowed if we wish to prosper, the luxury of isolation. We require instead the clear elucidation of where we are and where we want to go. We are part of the wider world, subject to its constraints and open to its opportunities. The international economy is our economy. Our security in a very real sense is everyone's security. The Green Paper that I will introduce, as a first and essential step to recognizing our interdependence, will focus on the relationships between foreign policy and economic policy and in so doing will look closely at Canada's competitiveness in the world.

Traditional foreign policy concentrations, including our relations with the countries of the Middle East, will obviously be an important part of this review. The views of respected organizations such as the Canada-Israel Committee will clearly be welcomed.

In the meantime, I and my colleagues in the government will work to strengthen the reciprocal relationship between Canada and Israel. My colleague, the Minister for Communications, the Honourable Marcel Masse will sign on March 18 on behalf of Canada an important video and film co-production agreement with Israel which will assist the film industries of both countries. Our film-makers will be able to share their talents and experiences in these unique and challenging fields.

I am also pleased to announce that negotiations will begin next month on the request by El Al to extend its services in Canada to Toronto's Pearson International Airport. If successfully concluded, this new link should open yet another part of our country to easier access by Israelis and be of convenience to Canadians from Central Canada travelling to the Holy Land.

We are also working hard at enhancing trade between Canada and Israel. Mr. Shamir and I discussed trade issues. There are obviously mutual benefits to be realized by increasing our efforts in this area. I was pleased to tell Mr. Shamir and now to inform you that the government has established a particular program for Israel, called Israel Technomart '85, under the Export '85 umbrella. It is planned, under this program to increase contact between our respective private sectors, that a Canadian trade mission will travel to Israel in June and later in the year that an Israeli delegation will come to Canada. This is an important development which will be coordinated with the provinces and which has my strong personal endorsement.

It is perhaps too much to say, given the constancy of Canadian support for Israel, that we are embarking upon a new stage

in our relationship. Yet it is clear that we are forging resolutely in the right direction to the mutual advantage of both countries. Aspects of our foreign policy will be reviewed and you will play a role in that process. When we met this morning, Mr. Shamir very kindly invited me to visit Israel. I am pleased to be able to inform you that I plan to take up that offer, in the context of a visit which I propose to make to the Middle East this fall to gather first-hand my impressions of the region.