



Statements and Speeches

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THE WORLD CHALLENGE: INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EAST/WEST TENSION

An Address by the Honourable Mark MacGuigan, Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Fiftieth Couchiching Conference, Geneva Park, Ontario, July 29, 1981

...The theme of this year's conference — international development at a time of East/West tension — goes to the heart of the world's most pervasive problems. How we approach its resolution will profoundly affect the quest of all mankind for the most fundamental of all human and social goals — namely, the attainment of peace, security and social justice.

Tonight I propose to lay out the general dimensions of this global challenge hoping that in the course of this conference other speakers will probe particular aspects of it, so that we may better understand the dynamics of our common dilemma.

The terms "North/South" and "dialogue" are convenient catch-phrases which to some degree over-simplify and obscure the realities of our international relationships. Too frequently in recent years the Third World has been portrayed in the West as a homogeneous group of nations having a number of common characteristics. The reality is quite otherwise, and by ignoring this we run the risk of engaging in simplistic analysis and of devising unworkable solutions. Nothing could be farther from the truth than the image of a world divided between a powerful North and a weak and dependent South. Events throughout the Seventies grossly altered that picture to the point where we must now confront not dependence, but interdependence. The most dramatic example has been the emergence of OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), now confronting the people of the North with a nagging situation long familiar to the South, namely dependency. Like the nations of the South, we too are seeking self-sufficiency.

Common goal

The evolution of viable courses of action make it imperative that we clearly understand the nature of the developing world. We have to recognize that in parts of the South, economic growth rates have outstripped those of the North. A number of developing countries are competing successfully in markets in the North. Even a nation like India, having a popular image as a poor and dependent nation, is now the ninth largest industrial power in the world. Very clearly, the notions of what we call "the developing world" in reality have only one important common characteristic — the desire to make their own way in the world.

But that goal will be next to impossible to achieve if the Third World nations are persistently caught up in the tensions of the North. Canada's parliamentary task force on North/South relations pin-pointed the problem this way:

"The ability of the North to promote or respond to the interests of the South is seriously impaired by tensions within the North, between the countries of the West

and the Communist bloc. East and West have frequently approached the South solely as a new arena in which to carry on old battles. Often their relations with governments in the South have been based on notions such as 'the enemy of my enemy must be my friend'. Progress in the years ahead will depend in no small part on moderating these tensions and abandoning such simple judgments."

Clearly, the relaxation of tensions between the East and the West would be helpful to making real progress in international development. In the West, our hopes have rested in large part on the process of *détente*. Unfortunately, while the goals of *détente* still remain valid, the invasion of Afghanistan resulted in an abrupt decline in optimism for this process in the West and a concomitant rising scepticism in the Third World. In many ways, that Soviet adventure evoked in the developing countries memories of the imperialist adventurism which they have worked so hard to shake off. For the West, it threatened the very foundations of *détente*.

But the West discovered, through the experience of Afghanistan, that there are divergences of view among us. They stem in part from differences of geography and interests, differences in proximity to the Soviet military threat, or differences in relationships with the Third World. In part, differing perceptions have stemmed from the different policy instruments employed in our various countries. In more tranquil times, these differences seem minor; but in a time of crisis they are magnified into cleavages of major importance. The important point, however, is that these differences in the West do not devolve from opposing political positions, but from legitimate and understandable characteristics in all of our societies.

No one can impose artificial uniformity on free countries. And even if it could, the price would be disastrous — namely the destruction of the resilience and dynamism of the Western world. This fact has been most strongly reinforced by last week's Economic Summit in Ottawa, where it became evident that for those countries participating in the Summit, a strong measure of agreement about goals was possible, at the same time recognizing that while identical measures to achieve those goals may not always be possible, measures will not be pursued which fail to take account of their effects on others.

The recognition of this principle of mutual concern for the impact of one country's policies on other nations is an important factor in the relationship of the West with the developing world. For some time, there has been a tendency to focus on such themes as "North/South" or "East/West". I believe we have now arrived at the stage where these themes converge — where for both the West and the so-called South, concern about the impact of policies on one another is a vital and necessary component of stable international relations.

Fundamental principles

Development policy is an integral part of foreign policy. It is because our foreign policy is so different from that of some other countries that our development policies are also different. It is for that same reason that Canada is so much more appreciated in the Third World than are some other countries. For example, in Canada, the government has for some time adhered to four fundamental principles in relation to international development in the Third World.

The first is that one of the goals of international development must be the promotion of genuine independence and stability in the Third World. In other words, we are opting for a pluralistic world in which all nations can pursue the objectives of independence and self-determination, and can, if they wish, choose non-alignment. Consistent with this, we want to immunize the Third World from East/West confrontation.

Our second principle is that no power should attempt to impose forms of government or economic systems on Third World countries. This recognizes the fact that the social, economic and cultural circumstances which prevail in Third World countries differ from ours, and that imposed systems may be not only offensive, but may be patently the wrong solutions to the problems they face. This does not mean that we will not seek to explain to those countries why we believe as deeply as we do in free and representative institutions. But even in this, the most convincing argument must surely be the degree to which we meet success in achieving our own goals as a society.

Our third principle is that governments of all nations must vigilantly observe their fundamental obligations to their own people. The protection of human rights is a legitimate international concern and the world cannot close its eyes to gross violations of them. But even here, I believe effectiveness must prevail over noisy recriminations. The important thing is that we succeed in changing the minds of offending governments — not in making hollow gestures that seldom change minds and almost certainly never change offensive practices.

The fourth principle is that Canada will avoid rewarding Third World countries which wantonly interfere in the affairs of other nations. Countries of the developing world face formidable challenges in building better conditions for their people — challenges which preclude the squandering of valuable resources on imperialistic adventures. It is for this reason that we have withdrawn our aid programs from countries like Vietnam and Cuba.

We believe these four principles must be adhered to if the objectives of the North/South dialogue are to be achieved. It is difficult to see, for example, how open and dynamic trading relationships between the developing countries and the countries of the Third World can be established if they face persistent pressures to align themselves with one of the two superpowers. Likewise, the effective use of development assistance will be impeded if these resources are earmarked for armaments to be used in the cause of a superpower.

Some question the wisdom of this course. They believe that through imposition of ideologies, one side or the other will gain a strategic advantage. This concern is rooted in historical experiences during the Fifties and Sixties — the difficult years of decolonization in large parts of the world — when we witnessed the courtship by the Soviet Union of many of these countries, fuelled in part by their own suspicions of their former colonial masters in the West. But today we see little homogeneous adherence to a single ideology in the Third World. Political forms and institutions vary greatly, determined in part by cultural factors which transcend the rigid tenets of Soviet ideology. In retrospect, we know that the ideological promotion of decoloniza-

Adherence to principles

tion brought few countries into the Soviet orbit — and these only for short periods of time. In addition, Cuba's efforts within the Non-Aligned Movement have only increased Third World suspicions of Soviet motives, particularly since the invasion of Afghanistan. In short, I believe that few Third World nations, having attained independence from Western colonial powers, are prepared to subject themselves ideologically to another power, especially the Soviet Union.

Ottawa Summit consensus

Those of you familiar with the "Declaration of the Ottawa Summit" may have a variety of views about how well the heads of government and others involved in that process met the concerns of the developing nations. And no doubt some of those views will be elaborated in the course of this conference. From my own vantage point, I believe the Summit consensus has gone a long way in identifying common ground with at least some of the principles that have been advanced by Canada for some years. For example:

The Summit quite explicitly supported the "stability, independence and genuine non-alignment of developing countries". This implicitly supports the immunization of the Third World from East/West confrontations. Explicitly, it is a commitment to non-interference where there is genuine non-alignment.

Beyond this, however, I believe that one very positive result of the Summit was an agreement to resume preparations for global negotiations. The significance of this commitment should not be underestimated, since in essence it represents — for some Summit partners at least — a return to a position abandoned when the process broke down last fall.

The declaration also committed the Summit partners to maintaining substantial and, in many cases, growing levels of official development assistance, as well as to direct the major portion of their aid to poorer countries.

Perhaps equally important to the developing world was the Ottawa Summit's agreement to resist protectionist pressures. While this commitment undoubtedly was designed to obviate the problems of inflation and unemployment which are aggravated by protectionism in industrialized countries, adherence to this principle can undoubtedly be a primary benefit to the developing world where access to markets remains a vital concern.

Taken together, these various developments — agreement among the Western industrial nations about the importance of respecting the independent and non-aligned status of developing countries, and the recognition that they must be assisted to figure more prominently and advantageously in the operation of the world economy — I believe these are hopeful signs for significant movement in international development. But ultimately, any successes in bridging the gap will not come from declarations. I suggest the most significant indicators of real progress in working towards meeting the aspirations of the Third World could be the following:

Progress indi- cators

First, the degree to which Third World countries are permitted to remain isolated from East/West confrontations. This will require that they be left free not only from

direct interference by the superpowers, but also free from intervention or interference from other Third World nations seeking to impose one or another political ideology or form of government.

Secondly, the degree to which the industrialized nations are prepared to enter into open bargaining with them in global negotiations. This will call for an understanding of the plight of the developing world on the part of the industrialized nations and, on the part of the Third World, an abandonment of inflexible positions and bloc voting patterns. A precursor of how we are all likely to succeed in this may well be the outcome of the North/South Summit in Mexico in October.

The third indicator — one which will no doubt be watched vigilantly by the developing nations — will be the evolution of more open trading patterns. Perhaps more than any other single step, the commitment to more open trading policies will require an act of political will by the industrialized countries. In some cases it will call for revised industrial strategies, large-scale technology transfer and more orderly marketing arrangements.

The fourth, but by no means last of the indicators, will be the strength of will shown by the Western nations to live up to their commitments to higher levels of official development assistance. For our part, we are aiming at a level of 0.7 of 1 per cent of gross national product by the end of the 1980s, and we hope that other industrialized countries will at least do as well.

No doubt the Third World will keep a watchful eye not on statements and sympathy expressed by the West, but on the commitments we make and the efforts we invest in keeping these commitments.

Steps in the
right direction

In summary, I am optimistic — perhaps reservedly so, but optimistic nevertheless — that progress is on the horizon. It would be naive to suppose that a new world economic order will emerge in a few short years. Recognition of mega-problems is always slow, even when our own welfare hangs on their resolution. In the quest for an accelerated and more just international development thrust, it is probably most realistic to expect not a single, giant step, but many determined steps — all headed in the same direction.

No doubt those directions and steps will be the substance of your considerations throughout this conference. I wish you well in those discussions, if for no other reason than that all of us must sharpen our comprehension of the complex issues that surround international development, and heighten the sensitivity of people everywhere — but particularly in the industrialized countries — to the urgent need to make a beginning. We must convince our own societies that there are no longer far-off lands, but that, in the words of Edmund Burke, "Whenever our neighbour's house is on fire, it cannot be amiss for the engines to play a little on our own."