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Notes for a toast on the occasion of a dinner offered by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, Secretary of State for External Affairs, in honour of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, Eduard Shevardnadze

OTTAWA

October 1st, 1986.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to welcome you to Canada. Maureen and I will always remember the wonderfully warm welcome we received last year in your vast and varied country. The impressions live on in memory -- Siberian expanses, modern cities, the mosaic of peoples and cultures.

This is your first visit to Canada, we hope only the first of many. We would like to show you more of our land and people. General Secretary Gorbachev during his visit across Canada in 1983 was struck again and again by the similarities in our landscapes and customs. Today, at Meach Lake, you must have been reminded of scenes of lakes and forests in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Minister, Canada is part of the New World but our roots strike deep into the Old. We look out onto the same three oceans as you, but the wellspring of our history and culture is in Europe. While our two founding peoples from Europe were English and French, one in seven Canadians has East European origins. Within our own frontiers we have forged a distinctive and united Canadian people. But history has also made us outward-looking and committed us to internationalism in world affairs.

Your visit, Mr. Minister, is testimony to the renewal of dialogue between our two countries over the past two years. In that time Prime Minister Mulroney and General Secretary Gorbachev have met and exchanged views. Six other Canadian Ministers have visited the Soviet Union, including myself. As a result we have expanded cooperation under the Arctic and Sports Exchange Agreements. We have decided to resume activity under the General Exchanges Agreement. During your visit we will renew the Economic Cooperation Agreement.

Next year we look forward to renewing our Arctic Exchanges Agreement. The Arctic is our common heritage and our common vision. We should seek to ensure it becomes a new focus of cooperation between us.

From our talks, you will appreciate that in our bilateral relations Canada is deeply concerned about two issues in particular. One is grain. Canada has long been a competitive and reliable supplier of grain to the Soviet Union. Agricultural trade has been a corner stone of our relationship. We have urged that the Grains Agreement be signed at an early date. The other is family reunification. I am concerned at the slow resolution of humanitarian questions of interest to Canada. Both these

matters are of fundamental importance to all Canadians. Your visit, Mr. Minister, has been timely in every respect, not least in the opportunity it has provided to work on these issues.

Mr. Minister, your visit has also given us the opportunity to discuss critical global problems. As foreign minister of one of the world's superpowers, you bear the weight of enormous responsibilities. The potential for nuclear holocaust puts the fate of all the world's peoples in your hands. And none more than that of Canadians who live between the two superpowers.

Let us be frank, Mr. Minister. Though geography makes us neighbours, history has set us apart. Canada is a founding member of North Atlantic alliance, and defends the North American continent in partnership with the United States. We are not neutral, and do not wish to be.

At the same time we have ceaselessly worked for less confrontational and more cooperative relations between East and West. Alongside the need to maintain security lies the "second track", the invitation to dialogue and cooperation, which Canada has always kept open.

Your visit, Mr. Minister, comes at an auspicious moment in East/West relations. We are closely following the innovations that General Secretary Gorbachev and his colleagues are introducing in the Soviet Union. We recognize in you, sir, a man who is already making his mark on the world stage and who is seeking to break out of the sterile, and ultimately deadly, pattern into which East/West relations have fallen in recent years.

We urge you to stay on that new course, because it offers the only real hope of improved relations. Canadians know something of the hearts and minds of our American neighbours. Their lives too are imperiled by nuclear war and impoverished by the spiralling arms race. Americans too want to find a way out.

Your speech to the United Nations last week was of great interest to us. You spoke of your country's wish to improve East/West dialogue and your belief in the real possibility of significant agreements in the area of arms control and disarmament. We hear you and we want to work with you.

General Secretary Gorbachev's speech in Vladivostok likewise expressed willingness to explore the possibilities for improved cooperation in Asia. His words are welcome and we now look for action. Above all, we hope we have detected a willingness to withdraw Soviet forces from an increasingly devastated Afghanistan. Compliance with the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act would also make an enormous contribution towards building the confidence that must underlie any and all agreements.

Mr. Minister, we must build on the confidence achieved at Stockholm. There, after almost three years of difficult negotiations, agreement was finally reached on important confidence-building measures. Our mutual security will be improved by providing more openness and predictability to military affairs in Europe. Canadians are proud to have been part of this mutual effort. We trust it will give needed impetus to other negotiations.

All eyes are now upon the nuclear and space negotiations in Geneva. General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan have raised hopes around the world. It is within their wisdom and power to go down in history as two leaders who put us back on course towards the safer and more peaceful world for which we fought together in the Second World War. Their meeting in Iceland, only two weeks away, will test the prospects for real progress in East/West relations.

Canada, for its part, will continue to work hard to develop and broaden cooperative relations between East and West. We do not expect attitudes and policies to change overnight but rather through a process of dialogue based on mutual respect and recognition of each other's legitimate interests. Canada will be playing an active role at the CSCE meeting in Vienna. I look forward to meeting you at its opening in November. I hope that there and elsewhere, we will be able to take further steps towards real dialogue and understanding.

Mr. Minister, there is new leadership in the Soviet Union. There is new leadership in Canada. Old problems remain to be solved, but we should not be prisoners of the past. We share an historic responsibility to bring our peoples closer together.

Ladies and gentlemen, would you please join me now in raising a toast to the health of the Foreign Minister and Madame Shevardnadze, to the future of Canada/Soviet relations, and to our shared hopes for a new era in East/West relations.