



Statements and Speeches

No. 76/10

CUBA-CANADA: A RELATION BASED ON KNOWLEDGE AND CO-OPERATION

Remarks by the Right Honourable Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, Cienfuegos, January 28, 1976.

Your Excellency the Prime Minister, Guests, Friends: It is my privilege, Mr. Prime Minister, to bring to you and the people of Cuba the greetings and good wishes of the Government and people of Canada. I am grateful to you for the hospitality your Government has extended to me and to my wife, and to the members of my party on this garden island. I appreciate your kind initiative in bringing us to Cienfuegos, a city with a long tradition and a wonderful bay. And I am especially grateful for the opportunity your invitation has provided to exchange views with you on relations between our two countries, on the western hemisphere in which we both reside, and on the broader world on which we all depend.

This moment in history is particularly appropriate for such conversations. It is so because I sense that the peoples of the world have accepted finally [the fact] that they live in an era of change. For close to 30 years, in a more profound sense than ever before, they have observed change, reacted to change, and engaged in change. Now, in 1976, the conception of change is firmly rooted as one of the few constant factors in an otherwise bewildering world. People everywhere have no alternative but to adjust to change. Yet change offers more than obligation -- it provides, as well, opportunity for benefit. It is the broad understanding that such opportunity exists that makes 1976 a promising year.

For Cuba this year holds forth many changes. You will be voting on a new constitution and electing representatives to a national and to local assemblies; you will be undertaking a new phase of economic development; you will be changing even the political-administrative divisions within the country. I wish you well in all these endeavours. I offer special congratulations to Cienfuegos: yesterday a village; today a city; tomorrow a province!

* * * *

It is an exciting time to be alive. There is immense opportunity for advantage through the wise application of new knowledge and new technology. And there is, as well, immense danger if wisdom is absent, because unwise policies in this nuclear age can lead to the destruction of the entire human race. Perhaps the single criterion

that remains as a reliable guide for the conduct of governments and individuals is the test of individual human benefit. Countries that have different social systems -- in some instances very different and even opposite systems --, countries that make different and at times radically opposed judgments about how best to serve peace and development in the world, are learning to speak together and work together towards the solution of common problems. It is by concerting our efforts that we shall find fair and effective solutions with a special concern for the weakest.

In this period of change, we find that in many respects national boundaries are becoming increasingly irrelevant, that commerce and culture and knowledge are no longer subject to the dictates of national units in an international world. We have come to recognize in recent years that many age-old human aspirations, and many brand-new economic aspirations, are so broadly based and so deeply rooted that they defy either control or satisfaction on a national basis. We have learnt that men and women will borrow from any source in their desire to better their own condition. And this fact forces governments to look about and to co-operate one with the other.

The history of Canada has been one of change, and -- equally important -- one of tolerance for both change and diversity. Canadians have long been receptive to new ideas.... Increasingly, as the world grows ever smaller, as issues become ever more interconnected, and as countries find themselves ever more interdependent, Canadians are looking outward. One of the regions of the world attracting our attention is Latin America. For that reason, Mr. Premier, we were happy last year to welcome to Ottawa your distinguished Vice-Premier, Dr. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez. And I am very pleased to visit you here. In these ways we shall come to know one another better, and to identify benefits available to Cubans and Canadians alike from a relationship based on knowledge and co-operation.

You had the wisdom, Mr. Prime Minister, to recognize from the outset that the highest priority must be given to the development of your country's human resources. Your record in the fields of land reform, health care, education, housing, sanitation and food production is envied by many countries. Yet you and your people know full well that those accomplishments were not gained without sacrifice. The Cuban experience has attracted interest from near and far. Because of its undoubted dedication to bettering the lives of Cubans, this record, both in its achievements and its shortcomings -- which you, Prime Minister, have analyzed courageously in public -- will long be studied by students of social and developmental processes.

* * * *

Canadian history and Canadian geography have taught us the importance of responsibility -- for our own acts and our own defaults. We are impatient with those who turn to explanations to excuse their every defect. Canadians want to participate actively in the creating of a new sense of community in this hemisphere and in the entire world. We are willing to work hard and to contribute much to a new economic order. At the same time, we ask that others, elsewhere, share some of our concerns as we share theirs.

One of our concerns is about the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Canada was the first country in the world that possessed the technology, the skills and the industrial base to produce a nuclear bomb -- and did not do so. We did not in 1945, when we were first able, we have not in the intervening years, and we shall not in the future. We shall not because we believe that the stature of a people is not measured by its destructive capacity but by its concern for the welfare of others.

There are not sufficient human or natural resources in this world to permit their continued dedication to destructive purposes if we are to gain any measure of relief in alleviating human misery of the most basic sorts. Illiteracy, poverty, famine, disease -- these are the common enemies of mankind. They cannot be overcome by military, and especially not nuclear, activity. If the dignity of individual human beings is our goal, as I believe it to be, nuclear weapons stand as a barrier -- not as a bridge -- towards its attainment.

We have talked of many things since my arrival, Mr. Prime Minister, and we shall talk of many more before I depart. In those discussions, we have found that we are not able to agree on every issue. We have found, instead, something more important -- that we can disagree honourably and without disrespect. The history of our relationship as countries throughout the past 15 years has been a demonstration of the ability of two peoples of broad differences to respect one another and to find areas of co-operation to their mutual benefit.

In 1976, our two nations will have in Canada two unique opportunities to co-operate and to compete. (And I hope that soon we shall have a third chance to meet, if you, Mr. Prime Minister, will do us the honour of visiting Canada.) In Vancouver in May, as I have already mentioned, we shall co-operate at "Habitat", the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. In Montreal in July, we shall compete at the Olympic Games. Each event, the co-operative and the competitive, will serve to demonstrate the value of peaceful and friendly ties between the peoples and governments of Canada and Cuba. To that peace and that friendship, and to the continued

4

good health of Prime Minister Fidel Castro, I offer my salutations.

Viva Cuba y el pueblo cubano!
Viva el Primer Ministro Comandante Fidel Castro!
Viva la amistad cubana-canadiense!

S/C