

STATEMENTS  
AND  
SPEECHES



DÉCLARATIONS  
ET  
DISCOURS

90/2

Notes for a speech by  
the Right Honourable Joe Clark,  
Secretary of State for External Affairs,  
at the University of Calgary,  
on Canadian policy towards Latin America

Calgary, Alberta  
February 1, 1990

Some Canadian attitudes towards foreign policy were developed when the world was smaller and Canada's interests were more limited. In the 1940's and 1950's Europe was at the centre of the world, and the compelling international challenge was to rebuild Europe after a devastating war, and strengthen or establish international institutions like the UN, and the world trading system. The Colombo Plan began our focus on international development, or aid in 1950. Before that, Canadian interests in Asia, Africa, or Latin America were left largely to traders, teachers, missionaries or others outside government.

Canada and the world have changed dramatically since those time. For more than ten years now, we have drawn more new citizens from Asia than from Europe, and our trade across the Pacific exceeds our trade across the Atlantic. We have become extensively involved in helping people in Africa, Asia and the Americas overcome disease and povety and our role in international organizations has increased to the point that we are among a small handful of nations upon whom the world counts to make multilateral organizations work.

Of course we pursue our interests on the large and well-lit stages of international life - working with the United States, with Europe, with Japan, within the powerful Group of Seven of the Economic Summit. Those, indeed, consume most of our attention in foreign policy. And no one should ever discount their importance.

But much of what is distinctive about Canada's international identity emerges on smaller stages - in dramas where, often, Canada's contribution makes a decisive difference.

That is why we have been so active in Southern Africa. In the final analysis, apartheid will be ended by the people of that region, black and white. But there is no doubt that Canada's presence, our steady pressure, our tangible practical support for the opponents of apartheid, have helped the forces of peaceful change. We could have stood back from sanctions, as other Western countries did. We could have walked away in moral outrage, as some Canadians proposed. Instead, we apply Canada's pressure and prestige, steadily and reasonably, seeking to draw whites away from fear and prejudice, and to draw blacks away from fear and violence.

That is also why Canada sought a place at the Peace Conference on Cambodia, and Co-chaired the Committee which designed a system of peacekeeping and verification.

And that is why we are increasing our role in Latin America, and have decided to join the Organization of American States.

Some Canadians believe that Latin America is not a priority for Canada, and that we have neither major interests nor real influence there. We disagree.

Many of the problems which plague the globe have a direct relation to Latin America.

One major threat to the hemispheric environment is the tragic destruction of the Amazon rain forest, where so much of the oxygen which sustains the world is born.

Dangerous industrial chemicals - now outlawed in Canada - are showing up in our lakes and rivers, borne by winds and rain from Central America.

We in the industrialized northern part of this hemisphere must help others avoid the mistakes we have made, for this planet cannot sustain repeated assaults on its environment.

The pandemic of drug abuse is disfiguring societies in both North America and Latin America. It is the most destructive form of interdependence, where demand in North America is feeding production in Latin America, and vice versa. Here too, the only solution is to act together.

The awful burden of debt is particularly acute in Latin America, and poses a threat to the fledgling democracies of the hemisphere. It also threatens the entire global economic system, and therefore Canadian prosperity.

Those are problems of surpassing significance. We can't walk away from them. But what makes our active presence in Latin America so important now, is the fact that those problems are matched by a new opportunity in the region, an opportunity brought by a new openness and a new pragmatism.

Democracy is sweeping Latin America. Dictatorships are now very much the exception. Not long ago, they won.

In addition, economies are being opened up and trade barriers are coming down.

Governments throughout the region - whether in Bolivia, Uruguay, Mexico, Venezuela or Argentina - are exhibiting extraordinary courage in tackling serious economic problems.

But as the governments of Eastern Europe are also realizing, it is one thing to change politics. It is another to turn around an economy. Economic adjustments bring social tensions. Democracy does not tolerate repression. Governments in Latin America must accept the risk of social upheaval while rejecting the techniques of repression. They need our support.

We must do more than applaud the trend towards democracy and the open market. It is something we must actively encourage. Democracy is still a delicate flower. Canada has an opportunity - and an obligation - to help it grow firm roots.

I want to deal head-on with one argument frequently made against Canada becoming involved more extensively in Latin America. This is that Latin America is the United States' backyard. That Canada will, therefore, be forced to toe the American line - and thus be rendered impotent and irrelevant. Or that in expressing a view different from that of the US, Canada risks Washington's wrath on issues of greater importance to Canada.

Curiously, that argument is usually made by people who call themselves "nationalists". It is a peculiar form of nationalism which holds that we should avoid areas of the world - or organizations such as the OAS - because we might be forced to confront Washington. That is not a nationalist mentality. That is a colonial mentality.

If we are to assert our influence, secure our interests, and state our views, silence is an odd instrument. So too is isolation. The problems of the hemisphere will not be solved through benign neglect.

We can't have influence in Latin America by staying away.

And we certainly can't help solve problems - problems which affect Canada directly, like debt, like drugs, like the environment - if we stand apart from the nations and the organizations where these problems are addressed.

It is perverse to argue that, whenever Canada agrees with Washington, we are doing so for American reasons. Canadian interests do not automatically coincide with those of the United States. But neither do they automatically conflict.

When the U.S. agreed with us that fighting acid rain was a priority, they were not doing so for Canadian reasons. They agreed to fight acid rain because they became convinced that it was an American priority.

When Canada pushed hard for the Open Skies concept, we did not do so because the Americans wanted it. The proposal first surfaced in Washington. We pushed for it, expanded it, and got it on the NATO agenda because it met Canada's interests in East-West relations.

One of the problems with the OAS - and it is a real problem - is the frequent polarization between the U.S. and Latin America. Latin American governments - without exception and with real enthusiasm - welcomed Canada's initiative to join the OAS. It would be very odd if they did that because they believed we would compound the polarization. On the contrary, they think we can play a significant role in overcoming that problem. We were welcomed because of our tradition as an honest broker, a country of reason, a country whose skills and independence have helped breathe life into multilateral organizations ranging from the United Nations to the GATT, to the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. In addition to being part of the neighbourhood, we possess and exercise precisely the talents which can overcome confrontation.

Indeed these are precisely the talents Canada has been applying to help advance the peace process in Central America. From the outset, the five governments of that region turned to Canada to help design a peacekeeping mission. That effort led to the adoption, on November 8 last year, of a unanimous U.N. Security Council resolution which created a security verification group to supervise an eventual peace in Central America. The structure of the peace-keeping operation closely followed the recommendations which Canada made after studying the requirements for an effective U.N. presence.

That is the sort of useful role Canada has played - and will continue to play - in the region. It is a role which not all can play. And it is a role which requires some judgements to be made.

Some Canadian NGOs criticize Canada's continued relations with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. We have been urged to cut off links, to walk away. Some European countries have done just that.

But when it came time to prepare for peace in Central America, it was not to those countries that the region turned. It was to Canada. For we maintained relations with the entire region - kept doors and borders open, to be in a position to assist when assistance was required.

Let me turn now to recent events in Panama.

When the United States intervened militarily in Panama, I made three points:

- The first was that Canada regretted the American action.
- The second was that we understood the reasons why the U.S. felt compelled to do what it did.
- And the third was that intervention by force is a very dangerous precedent.

No one would claim that the U.S. action was a high point in hemispheric relations. When Canada signed the OAS Charter, we, along with others members, signed on to the common principle of non-intervention in the affairs of other countries. Central America - as with the rest of Latin America - is not anybody's backyard.

What happened in Panama was the final act in a long series of efforts to bring democracy and civil order to that country. It followed a long series of provocations.

The May 1989 elections were declared null and void when General Noriega's candidate was about to lose.

You will recall the violence in the streets which followed that action - the terror directed against candidates who in normal circumstances would have won the election.

At that time, the U.S. was tempted to respond militarily. It did not, partly because various efforts were launched to find a peaceful solution. One of those efforts was launched by the Organization of American States. That effort failed.

There was then an abortive coup. Finally, there was the declaration by General Noriega that Panama was in a state of war with the United States. That was followed by the murder of a U.S. serviceman - who was in Panama as a result of U.S. treaty rights - and the harassment of his family.

That was the context of the U.S. action. Democracy had been attempted. It was thwarted. Peaceful solutions had been sought. The search had failed. Finally, after a murder and the declaration of a state of war, the U.S. decided to take action.

The important lessons of Panama go well beyond that episode. They relate to the social and economic conditions which have prevented democracy to grow firm roots. They relate to economic injustice and a history of human rights abuse. And they relate to a failure to build regional institutions which can prevent crisis from erupting and defuse them when they occur.

The challenge for Canada - and for the other states of this hemisphere - is to make intervention obsolete - obsolete not simply in law or practice, but obsolete in purpose. And the only way to do that is to help make democracy and prosperity not only the common rhetoric but also the common reality of the region.

The national doctrine which has provided the underpinning to past U.S. actions in Latin America is the Monroe Doctrine. This has its historical roots in the desire to exclude old European empires from this hemisphere and to preserve American economic advantage in the region. Latterly, it has been related to keeping communism out.

It is a historical fact that this has had its share of unfortunate consequences, not the least of which was an "anyone but a Communist" attitude whereby dictatorships divorced from the needs and aspirations of the people were accorded approval and support. Those regimes, in turn, through repression, economic mismanagement and denial of democracy, acted to exacerbate the very social tensions and inequalities which are the raw material for communism.

The lessons of this experience litter Latin American history. For Canada, the task ahead is to capitalize upon the current opportunity to encourage democracy, to build a new prosperity, and to construct a true community of nations in this hemisphere.

Those ambitious goals require hard work from the bottom up.

Our Latin America strategy is multi-faceted. Government has a role here. But so too does the private sector and individual Canadians. We must construct a web of new relations and understanding across many sectors.

One instrument is trade. We will mount trade missions throughout the region to seek areas for fair and mutual economic advantage - in agriculture, mining, oil and gas, forestry, and telecommunications .

Another is the shared fight against drugs, where we have given \$2 million in equipment to the Colombian drug enforcement agency and provided special RCMP training here in Canada.

A third is issue of debt, where Canada has provided over \$600 million in short-term bridge loans to Argentina, Mexico and Brazil in the lead-up to new agreements with the IMF, and where we chair the support group for Guyana, contributing \$60 million over the next three years to help that country establish a firm basis for future prosperity.

A fourth is peacekeeping, where we will contribute over 100 officers to ONUCA, the UN observer force for Central America, and where we stand ready to assist in Contra demobilization and the monitoring of a ceasefire in El Salvador, should that opportunity arise.

And a fifth is development assistance, where Canada will contribute \$100 million to the re-building of Central America after so many years of conflict.

The sort of building-block approach we will pursue was demonstrated most recently last week, where seven members of the Mexican Cabinet - the largest number to ever leave that country - came to Ottawa to meet with ten members of our Cabinet. The purpose was to lay the foundations for a new and expanded relationship. A number of agreements will be signed when the Prime Minister visits Mexico in March. They range from co-operation in agricultural research to expansion of tourism, from improved statistical systems to expanded trade, from environmental co-operation to joint action in drugs.

Mexico has announced that enhanced ties with Canada are a foreign policy priority. For Canada, a new partnership with Mexico is key to our Latin America strategy.

I would like to turn now to the OAS. The OAS is only one element of our Latin America strategy. That organization will not solve the problems of the hemisphere. Those problems have to be addressed by the countries of the hemisphere themselves. The imperfections of the OAS are but a reflection of the imperfections of its membership.

But the OAS has a role. And that role can be strengthened.

Canada has been asked to contribute to a working group of the OAS to do precisely that.

The OAS must be made a more effective forum for useful political dialogue. There is no magic solution here. The United Nations, which is currently undergoing a renaissance, has become more effective not because of any revision to its Charter or its procedures. It is simply being treated more seriously by its members - most notably the Soviet Union. We must explore all means available to have the OAS treated more seriously by its members.

The polarization within the OAS has also produced an extraordinary sensitivity to challenges to sovereignty in the region. That sensitivity has inhibited the use of the OAS for a political dialogue. Yet it must become a place of real dialogue, where disagreements might be resolved.

One step that might help would be to give the Secretary General the resources required to monitor and analyze developing situations on an ongoing basis, studies which could then trigger discussion within the OAS or further action by the Secretary General. I have in mind here the sort of Political Secretariat which has proven enormously useful to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

A second possibility is to encourage the Secretary General to act upon the new authority granted to him in 1988 to bring to the attention of OAS members issues which he believes might threaten the security of the region.

A third area for movement is the political profile of the OAS. I believe the OAS would be treated more seriously by its members if, as with other similar bodies, meetings were held at the Heads of Government level on a regular basis. It would be useful if, at an initial Heads of Government meeting, leaders could outline their specific views on how the OAS could be made more politically vital.

Finally, as the states of Latin America themselves become democratic, I believe we should expand the links between parliamentarians of the region, so that they can share perspectives and discuss issues of common concern.

There are also areas of functional co-operation which might be pursued by the OAS. Successful day-to-day programs are not the stuff of headlines; they do however constitute practical progress. A variety of possibilities should be explored, including:

- A Permanent OAS "Unit for Democratic Institutions", whose expertise could be called upon to co-operate in establishing and developing democratic institutions and in monitoring elections.
- A separate or affiliated unit which would conduct impartial investigations of irregularities in election or judicial processes if called upon by member states.



- An OAS 'Commission for Sustainable Development in the Hemisphere' which could prepare an annual report on the hemispheric environment, conduct studies and seminars on co-operative approaches to environmental action, and report to the OAS on a regular basis.
- An OAS Youth Exchange Program whereby youth from member states could experience the cultures of other countries in the region.
- An OAS program for the co-operative training of drug enforcement officers.

There are other possibilities. Canada will present the most promising to the OAS at its Assembly meeting in June.

There is one further area which warrants the attention of all states in the Americas. That is the place of Cuba. Cuba has isolated itself from this hemisphere. Many states in this hemisphere have isolated themselves from Cuba. No one would deny that Cuba has had a role in the current troubles in Central America. And few can look at the economic facts and not conclude that Cuba has suffered by exclusion from the hemisphere.

I will not ascribe blame here. I simply state that some of the current problems in Latin America could become more manageable if Cuba were brought back into the family of hemispheric nations.

Clearly the problems here are not easy to overcome. There is a lot of history, remembered personally and bitterly by influential people throughout the Americas. Perceptions and prejudices have taken firm roots. But I refuse to believe these are insurmountable.

Canada is a developed country with a unique standing among developing countries. We need to make more use of that standing. Last year, I applied to have Canada granted "guest" status at the meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement. I took the opportunity to pursue an idea proposed jointly by India, Egypt, Venezuela, Senegal and Yugoslavia, who had called for a renewed dialogue between the developed and developing world.

We need a new type of dialogue - pragmatic, realistic, conducted away from klieg lights and artificial deadlines.

Developing nations are discarding the unhelpful blinders of ideologies that don't work. They recognize that serious problems require joint effort; that ascribing blame is not a solution; that real partnerships must be built.

Equally, developed countries are moving away from a smug isolation. They are recognizing that the problems of the developing world are their problems too. That a laissez-faire approach to the future of this planet won't work. The developed world is also recognizing that new partnerships are required.

For Canada, this hemisphere is a good place to start to build this new partnership, bilaterally and multilaterally. The opportunities are great. So too are the challenges. And so is our responsibility.

Mikhail Gorbachev has called for a 'common European home'. I think its time that we in North America begin to think - and act - in terms of a 'common hemispheric home'. For too long, Canada has seen this hemisphere as our house; it is now time to make it our home. That is the challenge now before us. That is the purpose of our policy.