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Notes for an address by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs,
at the Ukrainian Village,
Elk Island Park, Alberta
on August 9, 1987

OTTAWA

August 13, 1987.

It is a privilege to be here today, speaking to you, and to do so in the presence of Danylo Shumuk. There were times in the past 12 years, sir, when the obstacles to your freedom seemed insurmountable. All of us were inspired by your own courage and determination. We never doubted that, some day, you would join us on Canadian soil. That we should be together to celebrate Ukrainian Day makes this an especially moving moment.

Even in the midst of these celebrations, however, we remember our neighbours who are fighting to rebuild their lives after the devastation of last week's tornado. No community in Edmonton -- including the Ukrainian community -- was spared the loss of loved ones. Only the genuine outpouring of concern and help from people right across Canada has made the tragedy bearable. Now we are seeing a very Canadian -- and a very Western -- determination to survive and to rebuild.

If there is any single characteristic that marks us as members of Canadian society, it is that we are free. Not everyone is free, as Mr. Shumuk can testify. Some systems of government deny freedom for their own people, and would limit it elsewhere. Europe today is divided between countries where citizens are free, and countries where they are not. That difference is based on a struggle between systems -- and in that struggle over freedom, Canada is not neutral.

We have fought for freedom in Europe in two World Wars. We welcome refugees and immigrants from Europe who come here to be free. We are active and influential members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization - NATO - and we will continue to be because the defence of freedom is not finished.

Our presence, with our Allies, on the front lines in Europe, is a sign to the West, and a sign to the East, that nations who value freedom will not be divided. Those who would pull Canada out of Europe would abandon Canada's duty and offend Canada's history. That is not the policy of this government.

We are interested in the reforms taking place in the Soviet Union under General Secretary Gorbachev. There has been real movement on a range of issues -- family reunification; freedom for Soviet Jewry; a government that is more willing to admit errors and to allow negative information to reach its own citizens on such events as the disaster at Chernobyl. But the facts require us to be cautious as well. We must always keep in mind how far the Soviet Union would have to go to give its peoples the palest imitation of what we already enjoy as free citizens of a free nation.

There is a danger of confusing the more aggressive Soviet communications policy with concrete, fundamental kinds of change. Certainly, the Soviet approach has had an impact on opinion in the West. We should welcome real change, but we should also ensure that Western nations present our side of any debate as aggressively as the Soviets present their side.

For example, in arms control and disarmament, the recent Soviet willingness to negotiate an agreement on intermediate range nuclear weapons simply means that the U.S.S.R. is ready to accept proposals that were made years ago by NATO countries.

In the same way, we welcomed the Soviet offer to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. But, when all was said and done, only 15,000 troops came out -- which left another 100,000 behind, roughly the same number that were involved in the invasion of Afghanistan almost eight years ago.

What is important is realism. There has been change. There may be more. It should be encouraged by Canada and other free societies.

We want to be sure the change is real before we celebrate -- and we must, throughout this period, maintain our own commitments to the values of free societies, and the means to keep the peace.

I am honoured to be with you today at this celebration. Nearly fifty years ago, my mother began her teaching career at Thorhild, and she considers the Ukrainian students she taught there among the best she met anywhere. All my life, it has been my privilege to work closely with Canadians of Ukrainian origin. Maureen and I had the privilege of visiting the beautiful city of Kiev two years ago -- where, Mr. Shumuk, we mentioned your name.

Ukrainians have contributed in every possible way to the life of this country. William Kurelek's paintings, the music of Steven Staryk or Donna Grescoe, the choreography of Natalka Dobrolige, the plays of George Ryga, the movies of Ivan Fecan -- all are deeply

ingrained into the Canadian mind and heart. All are products of Ukrainian art, and its deep roots in life, and the love of life.

As a politician, I think of Andrew Shandro, member of the Alberta Legislature, representing Vegreville in 1913, the first person of Ukrainian descent to gain a seat in a provincial parliament. And it is Vegreville, of course, that sent Canada's Parliament its first Member of Ukrainian origin, the late Michael Luchkovich. As it is Vegreville today, which is the home, and the seat in Parliament, of the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada.

Because the words of the poets are so essential to the lives of Ukrainians, I would like to close by quoting from Shevchenko's poem My Last Will.

He wrote:

When you sing, my future brethren,
Praising liberty,
In the family of free men,
Kindly mention me.

Shevchenko, of course, is more than "mentioned": He is revered wherever people gather, as we are doing, to honour Ukrainians. We think of all the free men and women, the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian Canadians who, by their work in every kind of human endeavour, have made this the Canada we love -- the Canada we celebrate -- today.

Thank you.