



THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO CANADA  
25 TO 28 SEPTEMBER 1983

SUMMARY

The first Prime Ministerial visit since 1976. Its origins. The aims of each side. (Paragraphs 1 to 4).

2. A triumphant success: the high point was a remarkable speech to both Houses of Parliament that eloquently emphasised the need for strength to protect not just peace but peace with freedom and justice. (Paragraphs 5 to 8).

3. Subsequent speeches in Toronto brought into relief differences between the Prime Minister's view of the world and that of her host, Mr Trudeau. These differences were put into perspective in a final exchange of speeches in Edmonton. (Paragraphs 9 to 11). Successful television interviews further increased the impact of the visit. (Paragraph 12).

4. A brief meeting with Mr Trudeau and some of his senior Ministers ranged rapidly over a number of bilateral and international issues. It was followed by a tête-à-tête, and then a lunch at Mr Trudeau's residence. (Paragraphs 13 and 14). The Prime Minister met the new Leader of the Opposition, Mr Mulroney. (Paragraph 15).

5. Successful visits to Toronto and Edmonton brought the Prime Minister into contact with two of Canada's most important provinces and provincial premiers. (Paragraph 16).

6. Conclusions. New life has been breathed into discussion here of the great international issues. (Paragraph 17). In reminding Canadians that they matter to us, the visit was a massive success. (Paragraph 18).



BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION  
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The Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey Howe  
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5 October 1983  
026/3

Sir,

The Prime Minister, accompanied by Mr Thatcher, the Secretary of the Cabinet and the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, paid a brief official visit to Canada from 25 to 28 September, the first such visit since 1976. It had a remarkable impact on a population unused to the politics of conviction, and has left them somewhat dazed.

2. The invitation to visit Canada - first issued in December 1981, and often repeated - stemmed from Mr Trudeau's genuine gratitude to Mrs Thatcher for her unwavering determination to do whatever the Canadian Government and Parliament wanted on the patriation of the constitution, notably at Melbourne in October 1981. But he no doubt hoped too to make the visit useful to him politically. He was running a risk in exposing Canada to a leader whose style and approach is so different to his own, and at a time when his own popularity is at a low ebb. He sought to lessen that risk by accompanying Mrs Thatcher on her visits to Toronto and Edmonton, giving the dinners for her in both cities, packing those dinners with at least 75% of Liberal supporters and doing everything possible to limit or emasculate contacts between Mrs Thatcher and the very many Canadians, especially provincial premiers, businessmen and conservatives, who do not support him. His repeated appearances with Mrs Thatcher had the paradoxical effect of underlining the contrast between host and guest, as they spoke



in turn together in Parliament in Ottawa, Toronto and Edmonton. Trudeau was certainly out-shone, and I doubt if he cared for this, but politically he may have done himself no harm in the long run by emphasising his anxiety to reduce the temperature of the exchanges between the United States and the Soviet Union.

3. For us the visit was an ideal opportunity to set the seal on the restoration of good relations between the two governments following the strains of two years ago when a confrontation between the two parliaments seemed entirely possible and there was a very real fear that a constitutional package opposed by eight provinces might be rejected by the British House of Commons and that Mr Trudeau would have gone to the country on the theme of opposing colonial interference. Relations have steadily improved since then. It is common ground between the two governments that our close links are in danger of eroding if we do not work actively and continuously to keep them in good repair.

4. In this context the Prime Minister's visit gave us a supreme opportunity to put over to the Canadian public the idea that the British people and government mind about Canada, that we value her as a friend and ally, and that we care about our relationship with her. In this the visit was a triumphant success.

5. The high point was the Prime Minister's address to a joint session of both Houses of Parliament, with, the Federal Supreme Court in attendance. Mr Trudeau introduced the Prime Minister in a speech which expressed his warm thanks to Mrs Thatcher for having demonstrated «her deep and constant respect for the Parliament of Canada as the legitimate voice of the people of Canada», omitting to add that that Parliament has a Liberal majority based almost entirely on Quebec and to a lesser extent Ontario. He concluded this part of his speech by saying, «To the long list of the Fathers of Confederation, Madame Speaker, we must certainly now add the name of one Mother».



6. But he also spoke, at greater length, of the need for world leaders to work for peace, laying emphasis on NATO as responsible for 34 years of peace in Europe, quoting from the Williamsburg communiqué the passage on reducing the threat of war which he had fought to include, and saying that «Today, at the moment when we are about to listen to Mrs Thatcher, the great challenge is to inspire the world for the cause of peace.» He may well have felt a need not just to set the scene for her speech, but to remind his wider audience in Canada where he places the emphasis between defence and disarmament.

7. The Prime Minister's speech was a triumph. She was greeted by a standing ovation when she arrived, interrupted by frequent applause, and given another standing ovation when she had finished. The fire and conviction of her delivery may even have misled some of her hearers, in Parliament and across the country, into thinking that she was saying something other and rather fiercer, than what she actually said. But many of her wide audience will have been inspired to think again about the central issues of peace with freedom and justice about which she spoke with such eloquence. The occasion, with its daunting echoes of one of Mr Churchill's most famous speeches, seemed to bring out the best in audience as well as speaker. One or two members of the New Democratic Party voiced their dissent, and the Russian, Czech and Bulgarian Ambassadors sat stonily through the applause: but, interestingly, the newly-arrived Pole leapt to his feet with the rest of us - a gesture which I hope will not cost him a speedy return to Warsaw - and so did the Hungarian. (The texts of this speech and of the Prime Minister's other speeches are being copied to the Department, together with Mr Trudeau's speeches and the detailed programme).



8. This public exchange of views - for such it was - touched off a series of such exchanges on public platforms which was the visit's most remarkable feature. That evening Mr Trudeau gave a dinner in Toronto for some 1100 invited - and largely Liberal - guests. The Prime Minister was, I think, vexed at being used politically in such a blatant way. And when Mr Trudeau emphasised their different approach to East/West relations, quoting Lord Carrington as saying that we ought not to go on facing down the Russians in a silent war of nerves, punctuated by periods of «megaphone diplomacy» and also took up, in public, a theme that he had pursued in the Cabinet Room that morning, on the need for politicians to take a hand in strategic issues and not leave it to the «nuclear accountants», Mrs Thatcher ominously began to make notes. She then rose and casting aside her notes, gave a long and fluent riposte in which she resumed part of her speech to Parliament, stressing the need for the Alliance to be resolute in the face of Russian pressure, and went on to spell out, to the evident delight of her audience, her passionate belief in unfettered free enterprise and the need to free the creators of wealth from excessive controls and excessive government spending. Such was her sincerity and eloquence that even this carefully screened company were swept off their feet and began to cheer, so that at one point Mrs Thatcher, knowing that she was addressing Trudeau supporters, turned to Mr Trudeau and murmured in an aside «I'm doing all right with this audience, Pierre». But he himself was, as one of his Ministers observed to my wife, certainly far from happy with what she was saying.

9. These same economic themes formed the substance of a major speech that Mrs Thatcher delivered the next day to an audience of 1700 at a combined luncheon by the Empire and Canadian clubs of Toronto. It was a wide-ranging and thorough description of her economic policies and their rationale, and was received with great enthusiasm by an audience more uniformly like-minded than any other she addressed during her



visit. The speech contained relatively few references to Anglo-Canadian trade though Mrs Thatcher did invite her audience to invest in Britain. And I believe that most of her hearers will have taken it as a compliment that she chose to speak to them mainly on broad universal themes, and to treat them to a major exposition of her beliefs.

10. The last appearance with Trudeau, at the dinner in Edmonton, produced something of a public reconciliation. Mr Trudeau was notably conciliatory, and the Prime Minister responded in kind, speaking warmly about the reception she had been given in Canada, thanking Canadians for the use of the British training areas in Alberta, and saying things about Alberta and Western Canada which have given enormous pleasure to Western Canadians. If Mr Trudeau or his entourage had any tendency to harbour misgivings about the way the visit had gone, this friendly exchange will have done much to lessen them. So too will Mrs Thatcher's resolute refusal to be drawn, when talking to reporters and interviewers, into confirming her disagreements with Mr Trudeau. In her Edmonton speech she treated the issue light-heartedly, describing herself and Mr Trudeau as good sparring partners, and bringing the house down with one widely-quoted sally - «Occasionally we disagree, but only, Prime Minister, when you are wrong».

11. Though the speech to Parliament will continue to reverberate for a long time to come, it must be confessed, in this media-dominated age and place, that two other, more minor, occasions played almost as great a part in the impact that Mrs Thatcher had on Canadians throughout the country - two extended television interviews in which she ran circles round two leading interviewers, correcting their errors of fact or nuance, and putting her views across with great verve and clarity past a barricade of somewhat biased questioning.



12. By comparison with the public side of the visit, the private exchanges with Mr Trudeau and his Ministers were brief and low on content. In one sense this is understandable: there are at present no bilateral issues between us of a consequence that can compare with the great issues of defence and disarmament, and on some issues that matter to the Canadians, such as fisheries and newsprint, their negotiations have to take place with the European Commission, not with us. But it was disappointing that Trudeau chose, as it seemed, to try to shield his Ministers from exposure to the full force of Mrs Thatcher's views on defence and East/West relations by devoting so much of their brief joint session to planting markers on such questions, and for instance, the position of British pensioners, partly I suspect, for public relations or electoral reasons. It is perhaps indicative of the overriding importance attached to the speech to Parliament that this session with Ministers was squeezed into three quarters of an hour before question time - rescheduled for 1100 in the morning. Despite these limitations there were lively interventions by the Minister of State for External Relations, and the Minister for Defence, both newly appointed to those positions, arguing for more contact between Ministers; to ensure for instance that we understand each others positions thoroughly over fisheries, and that collaboration in defence research is pursued cost-effectively.

13. More importantly, Mrs Thatcher was able to turn the second half of the discussion towards wider issues, by referring to her surprise that an interviewer had seemed not to realise that Canada was a partner in NATO's twin-track decision. In the ensuing exchange Mr Trudeau recognised the importance of this point, but also expressed concern at the fact that the disarmament negotiations were, as he put it, in the hands of the technical experts rather than the politicians. In reply the Prime Minister emphasised that the choice was the



politicians' - in this, as in ensuring that their armed forces had, and obeyed, responsible rules of engagement, rather than shooting down civil airliners that went astray. Before moving to Mr Trudeau's official residence for luncheon the two Prime Ministers had a private discussion in the course of which Mr Trudeau said that he thought that Canada would abstain on the Falklands issue at the General Assembly this year, if the resolution was much the same as last year's. Discussion over luncheon was informal, but Mr Trudeau took the opportunity to impart to the Permanent Under-Secretary his disquiet at the lack of progress over Namibia.

14. The Prime Minister made room in her tight schedule for a meeting of three quarters of an hour with the Leader of the Opposition, the Progressive Conservative's newly chosen leader Brian Mulroney. He was clearly grateful for the chance to meet Mrs Thatcher, and took a modest and straightforward approach - gaining full marks afterwards for a firm «no comment» to the assembled press.

15. From the start I had been anxious to include meetings with the two most important Provincial Conservative leaders, Davis of Ontario and Lougheed of Alberta. Each of them wields great power in an important province. Ontario has a GNP the size of Switzerland or Sweden's, 40% of Canada's GNP, and produces 50% of Canada's manufactured goods. Alberta is less preponderant but her oil lends her a special significance - and a special interest in and for Britain. In the event these meetings, each arranged over an extended breakfast, and each preceded by a tête-à-tête (deftly arranged by each Premier despite laborious Federal efforts to prevent them taking place without Federal representation) went very well. Mrs Thatcher was visibly impressed by the importance of the Provincial Governments, and the Provinces, and said so when she was leaving Alberta at the end of her visit. This will not have been welcome to her



Federal host, but is true, fair comment, and a fair make-weight to the slightly shaded passage about the constitution in Mr Trudeau's speech in Parliament.

### Conclusions

16. What has this visit changed? It is too soon to say how much it has really altered the political climate inside Canada, but it has certainly provided Canadians with a mark against which they will tend to measure the stature of their own political leaders. I believe that the visit has also contributed to a certain polarisation of attitudes on East/West relations that has occurred since, with the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives revealing more clearly the difference in their attitudes to the Soviet Union in the context of the shooting down of the Korean airliner. The debate here about the testing of cruise missiles (in Alberta) has been taken a step further, and will now take place against a clearer perception of the issues at stake. Mr Lougheed came off the fence and declared himself in favour of testing. I believe that many Canadians will have listened with respect and approval to the different messages that they were receiving from both Mrs Thatcher and Mr Trudeau - the one emphasising the need for strength and determination not to allow the Russians to steal a march on us, and the other stressing the importance of dialogue between the super-powers. To ensure that, in the months ahead, we do not lose support in Canada for implementation of the twin-track decision we will need to ensure that our readiness to negotiate comes over as clearly as our readiness to deploy if negotiations fail.

17. In the primary aim of persuading Canadians that we value our relationship with them the visit was a massive success. The Prime Minister has put Britain back into the forefront of Canadian awareness. I share the view of one respected Canadian journalist who said in a recent column that no visitor has had



such an impact here since John Kennedy's visit twenty years ago. And it was a privilege for all of us to be able to take part in such a notable occasion.

18. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Ambassadors in NATO capitals and Moscow and to the United Kingdom Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council.

I am Sir  
Yours faithfully

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