

Remarks of  
U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
BERNARD W. ARONSON  
at the  
ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES  
September 28, 1990

Following are the remarks by Assistant Secretary Bernard W. Aronson before ambassadors and guests at the Organization of American States (OAS), Washington, D.C., September 28, 1990, with an introduction by Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi, U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS.

Ambassador Einaudi: We have the privilege of hearing a few words from the Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs of State (Bernard W. Aronson), who has done so much to support our efforts to improve the effectiveness and quality of our cooperation with the nations of this hemisphere.

Bernard William Aronson. Born in 1946. A graduate with honors in 1967 from the University of Chicago. As a boy, he grew up learning about politics -- the politics of the early struggles of the Civil Rights movement. As a young man, after graduating from university, he joined the VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) volunteer program -- something of a domestic Peace Corps -- working in Appalachia.

His skill with words led him rapidly to become a reporter with the Raleigh Register newspaper in the small, but notable, town of Beckley, West Virginia. He then joined Miners for Democracy, a reform movement that challenged the then corrupt and violent leadership of the United Mine Workers of America (UMW). The struggle was dangerous and most difficult. But the reformers won. Then (UMW) president Tony Boyle was defeated in open elections in 1972. Bernie Aronson spent the next few years working with the United Mine Workers union.

In 1977, he joined the White House staff as Special Assistant and Speechwriter of the Vice President (Walter Mondale), Executive Speechwriter to the President (Jimmy Carter), and Deputy Assistant to the President in the Office of the Chief of Staff.

In 1981, when the White House changed occupants and parties, Mr. Aronson left to become Director of Policy for the Democratic National Committee for two years and, then, Director of the Democratic National Strategy Council. In this period, he intensified his Congressional work and began to develop his knowledge of Latin America, beginning first with a

visit to El Salvador and increasing awareness of the problems of the loss of freedom in Nicaragua.

Mr. Aronson was confirmed as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs in June 1989. He was among the very first to be chosen by Secretary of State James Baker and President George Bush as the person to whom they would turn for advice on all the key issues involving relations between the United States and the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. No one else has this responsibility; no one else has worked this hard or with this much success. I am proud to introduce Bernard Aronson.

Assistant Secretary Aronson: I would like to recognize the Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Edmund Lake, the Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Joao Baena Soares, the Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, Ambassador Christopher Thomas, and distinguished members of the diplomatic corps and friends who are here today.

Before I begin, I would like to say a brief word about the two distinguished gentlemen at my left and right.

First, my friend, the Ambassador of the United States to the OAS, Luigi Einaudi. When a President of the United States chooses an Ambassador, he sends a message about the kind of relationship he hopes to build. In choosing Luigi Einaudi to serve as the U.S. Permanent Representative, President Bush sent a very clear message at the start of his presidency. His message was that, at a time of enormous hope and opportunity and challenge in this hemisphere, the United States could not settle for anything but the best in the career foreign service to represent the United States before the Organization of American States.

I dare say without fear of contradiction that there is no one in the U.S. government with more understanding, experience, knowledge, and -- I would add -- affection for the leaders, nations, and peoples of this hemisphere than Luigi Einaudi. President Bush, Secretary Baker, and I benefit enormously every day from his insight and his example. The United States is proud to be represented by Luigi Einaudi at the OAS.

I would also like to say a word about my friend and your distinguished Secretary General, Ambassador Baena Soares. There are few jobs more difficult in this hemisphere than the responsibility that your Secretary General assumed at the start of his tenure. This organization literally stood at a crossroads; and I think all of us recognized that. It could either have become revitalized and renewed or it risked withering into impotence and irrelevance; such was the

dimension of the crisis it faced. But this Secretary General never wavered in the direction he set out in.

He has broken new ground in a host of countries and on a host of issues. Just to cite a few:

- o There would be neither peace nor democracy in Nicaragua today without the leadership of the OAS and the CIAV (International Committee for Support and Verification).
- o And, when democracy comes at last to Haiti, as I believe it will through elections this December, the people of this hemisphere will note that this Secretary General and this organization had the courage and the commitment to take an early stand, along with CARICOM (Caribbean Community), to go to Haiti to support a free and fair process.
- o The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights continues its proud tradition of speaking for those who cannot defend themselves.

Today, as well, this organization breaks ground in confronting new challenges, including the menace of narcotics. And, the OAS breaks ground in seeking new opportunities by establishing a working group headed by the distinguished ambassador from Argentina (Juan Pablo Lohle) to consider the President's Enterprise for the Americas Initiative.

This is not an easy organization to lead, as all of you know well. We are many nations, with disparate views and traditions. Frankly, too often we fail to give our Secretary General the support that we know he deserves.

I believe that the OAS has already passed through its crisis and come out stronger and better for it. And, I hope that we continue in this direction because this hemisphere needs a vital, active, and bold regional organization -- both to confront the dangers and to seize the opportunities that face our nations and peoples as we begin this final decade of the 20th century.

I want to take this occasion of the 100th anniversary of this proud organization to reaffirm my own country's strong commitment to its future. The United States believes in the OAS; we value our membership in this proud organization. Even when we are disappointed in its actions -- as we have been from time to time -- we never waiver in our commitment to work to strengthen the bonds of inter-American cooperation and the friendships that we have built with all of you.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect for a few minutes on the view from Washington of our hemisphere and our role in it, our hopes, our fears, and most of all the enormous opportunities that lie before us in this unique moment of our collective history.

When we read the newspapers we are struck by the historic changes that are sweeping this world: the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the revival of democracy; the profound, continuing changes within the Soviet Union, and what we trust and hope is the beginning of the end of the post-war Cold War; the emergence of the Economic Community in Europe, the reunification of Germany; and the economic miracle in Asia. Now we have seen in the response to the aggression in Kuwait an example of what we hope will be a new world order -- a new sense of collective responsibility and commitment by the world community to defend the rule of law.

All of these changes are profound; indeed, some are breathtaking. But I believe the commentators and analysts have missed an equally profound and historic set of changes here in the Western Hemisphere.

We are in the midst of two profound and related revolutions. The first is a political revolution in which many of the individuals and the nations represented here today have played the leading role. The people of the Americas -- from Asuncion to Santiago, from Managua to Port au Prince -- have made a fundamental decision that has transformed our hemisphere. They have declared that there is no longer political legitimacy without democracy, and that they will not accept the rule of colonels or comandantes or any other elites who claim to rule in the name of the people but will not let the people govern themselves. They have also soundly rejected the assertion that by denying freedom you can deliver social justice. Because they have discovered, to their regret, that those who deny freedom also deny social justice.

I believe there are many inspirations for this democratic revolution, including the tradition of the rule of law that has existed for so long in the Caribbean, which is the home to the oldest continuing parliament in the Americas. I believe that the commitment of the brave men and women throughout the Americas who risked, and sometimes sacrificed, their lives for democratic values have been an example. And, I hope that democracy in the United States has also been an inspiration to this great revolution.

We have also witnessed an intellectual revolution every bit as profound. A new generation of democratic leaders has recognized a fundamental truth: that, just as political freedom is the key to peace, economic freedom is the key to

opportunity. This revolution about economic policy is every bit as courageous as the political revolution waged in defense of democracy, for it too is waged against powerful, entrenched interests.

These two revolutions are related. For democracy to survive and prevail, democracy must deliver -- not just to the well-to-do, but to those who have never had a chance. The Economist magazine wrote, at the beginning of my tenure, that "the elected presidents of this continent rule from capitals ringed by shanty towns swollen with refugees of an oppressed countryside." That is not a vision that will sustain democracy for long. The old system of special privileges and favors, protectionism, and rigged rules, is an economic dinosaur; it cannot long stand in this new global, competitive economy.

The 90's will see the most profound and fierce competition for capital that the world has seen in the postwar era. Only those countries that can inspire confidence and open up their systems to new investment will be able to survive in this environment. I am an optimist about the potential of the Americas, but I must acknowledge that the recent rise in oil prices brought on by the crisis in the (Persian) Gulf and the potential that it will push the industrial democracies toward recession could not have come at a worse time for many of your countries. We must find ways to mitigate the damage lest all our hopes sink before this new crisis.

Today, our central task is to respond to these two revolutions creatively and effectively; to consolidate democracy, to dig its roots so deep that no special interest or entrenched minority can pull them out; to build and defend democratic institutions; to advance the cause of human rights and the rule of law; and to build in the Americas the world's first completely democratic hemisphere.

President Bush has enunciated a vision that drives the United States -- his Enterprise for the Americas. We must tear down the barriers to trade and investment from Argentina to Alaska and set loose the tremendous creative energies of this hemisphere's people to create, produce, and grow.

There is no short cut to reaching this vision. There are no easy answers or quick fixes. Hard political choices must be made, and no one will make them for us. Here in the United States, we're in the middle of our own budget negotiations. So we know that the doctrine that we preach to you comes with a price, that democratic leaders -- including those in the United States -- must make difficult decisions that are not always popular.

The vision that we have of a free trade regime throughout this hemisphere is not a vision of a new trade bloc with a new set of barriers to the outside world, but of a free trade regime to stimulate worldwide commerce and growth. Each of us must do our part. Clearly the first challenge is to ensure that this round of negotiations in the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) is successful. Here, I think we are making common cause and will hopefully be successful in tearing down barriers to products from this hemisphere, particularly in the area of agriculture.

We also face new challenges to our vision. In some countries, the forces of violence continue to threaten and attack democratic institutions. We face the challenge of drugs and new threats to our common heritage of clean air, rainforests, water, and streams.

The OAS and all of us must rise to meet these challenges; John Donne wrote that no man is an island unto himself, each is a part of the main. This is also true among nations. We must do more to help those nations that need our help, to show solidarity with those that are embattled. El Salvador's democratic government is waging a courageous struggle against forces of violence. It is waging a struggle to achieve peace. It needs the solidarity of this hemisphere as it goes through this difficult moment.

The people of Haiti need our help. We should not be indifferent at this moment -- we must be engaged. I believe we have, for too long, neglected the continuing conflict in Suriname. Perhaps the OAS could play a role, if the Government of Suriname would welcome that.

I am not advocating interventionism, but collective responsibility. A democratic partnership cannot be based on indifference, because the problems of a few soon become problems of us all.

There is no better example than the threat of narcotics; I think here we have made important progress. We are no longer pointing fingers of blame at each other, north and south, arguing whether consuming nations or producing nations are responsible for this crisis. Here in the United States, we recognize that as long as some American citizens are willing to spend as much for illegal narcotic substances as this nation spends for imported oil, we will have a drug problem. We must do more to reduce demand, and we are committed to doing so. And I will note that, when President Bush sat down with the presidents of Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia at Cartagena, the first issue he addressed was what we are doing in the United States to reduce demand, particularly among our young people.



This problem once appeared to be confined to a few countries of our hemisphere, but more and more nations are threatened by this spreading menace. This is not just a question of criminal behavior, but an assault on the rule of law, democratic institutions, and, ultimately, on civilization itself. We cannot appease these narcotraffickers, we must defeat them. And we can only do so together. We must have a strategy that we all formulate and accept to reduce demand, to interdict drug traffic, and to find alternative economic opportunities for those who are caught up in drug trafficking, not because they wish to be, but because they are poor and have no alternatives.

I would remind those who think that there is a short cut to dealing with this menace or who hope to ignore it, of something President Kennedy once said: Those who seek to ride the back of the tiger, usually end up inside.

We have a collective challenge and responsibility to preserve the heritage of the next generation: our land, our water, our air, and our rainforests. I hope that the developing nations of the hemisphere can learn from those of us who sacrificed our environment in the early stages of our history in the name of growth and learned to regret it.

I am optimistic about the future of the Americas, but I am also sobered by the dimensions of the threats and dangers. One thing I know: change is upon us. Those who resist or ignore it will be swept aside. We must ask ourselves: can we manage change, turning it to peaceful and hopeful purposes, or is our vision too narrow or are we too timid to act in time?

To act in time, we must shed the old illusions and myths that confront our own relations, here in the OAS and throughout the hemisphere. We must shed the baggage of the past and the stereotypes of yesterday. We must see each other clearly and speak frankly and honestly about the many areas where we agree and also about our genuine differences. That kind of dialogue is the essence of the OAS and we are committed to engage in that dialogue with our friends in the Americas.

We believe it is a two-way street. It is not just what you can learn from us but what we can learn from you, and what we can do together. But dialogue must end in action; otherwise it is an academic and, ultimately, empty exercise.

The world is moving swiftly. We have enormous opportunities to seize and little time to waste. Secretary

Baker said in the first weeks of this Administration:

"Some look at the crises and problems facing the hemisphere today and despair. I am not one of them. I believe that if we have the courage and the will to seize the opportunities before us, this is a time when we can dream great dreams for all the peoples of the Americas. I believe the day will come when the democratically elected leaders of the Americas will be seen as the pioneers who blazed the trail that will lead one day to the world's first completely democratic hemisphere. I believe that our hemisphere can become a model for the rest of the planet for a true partnership between the developed and developing nations, where trade is free and prosperity is shared and the benefits of technology are harnessed for all. And I believe the day will soon come when in all nations of the Americas the rule of law prevails, human rights are respected, the strong are just, the weak secure, and all our people live in peace."

Thank you, very much.