



Statements and Speeches

No. 77/18

HELSINKI – THE FINAL ACT: PRINCIPLES AND PROVISIONS

Opening Canadian Statement by Mr. Klaus Goldschlag, Special Representative of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, Belgrade, October 6, 1977.

We are all indebted to our host government for permitting our preparatory meeting and us to inaugurate this imposing and imaginative conference building and for all the courtesies that are being extended to us. The history of Yugoslavia has given it an important stake in the themes that are before us and it has done much, through its policy and through its actions, to advance them. It is entirely fitting, therefore, that the capital of Yugoslavia should imprint its name on this meeting.

A little more than two years ago, the political leaders of our countries met in Helsinki to subscribe their signatures to the Final Act. They did so "mindful of the high political significance" of that document and "declaring their determination to act" in accordance with its provisions. They recorded their resolve to continue the process that had culminated in the signing of the Final Act, and directed us to meet in Belgrade this year for this purpose. We are here today, therefore, to take stock of what has been accomplished in the interval and to see where we go from here.

When the Final Act was signed, it evoked varied reactions. There were those who attached great hopes and expectations to it. They saw it as marking the passage of Europe and North America from the period of Cold War. They took seriously the more secure and civilized international order to which it seemed to point. Others were more sceptical. They were not insensitive to the political vision the Final Act held out. But they were concerned about the balance of advantage that the negotiations had yielded. Still others shrugged it off altogether. They thought that the negotiations had been a misguided effort, that the Final Act either changed nothing or, worse, that it aroused expectations that would not and could not be fulfilled.

A balanced view would lie somewhere in between. We cannot agree that the effort should not have been made. Nor can we discount the possibilities that have been opened up. But we must also admit to ourselves that expectations fall well short of having been met. The political landscape is still far from idyllic. We are still in a situation where stability probably owes as much to fear of nuclear war as it does to any political arrangement we have yet succeeded in making. This is not a comfortable thought. It becomes even less comfortable when we review the uneven and, on the whole, modest progress achieved in the last two years towards realizing the objectives of the Final Act.

Nevertheless, we are prepared to be realistic. The Final Act covers a broad canvas of objectives. If they had been within easy reach, it would not have been necessary to negotiate them so laboriously. It is of some significance that we succeeded in formu-

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