

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 toward realizing the objectives of the Final Act.

Nevertheless, we are prepared to be realistic. The Final Act covers a broad canvass 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 formulating them at all and that they now carry the consensus of thirty-five countries and the commitment of our political leaders.

The Final Act reaches into the future. Perhaps two years is not long enough to assess its impact fairly. But two years is long enough to have identified the impediments to better progress. Public interest in all our countries is focussed on Belgrade and those who are most serious about the Final Act are also those who expect the most from our deliberations. How best can we approach the task that has been delegated to us?

In the Canadian view, there is an inherent logic to our agenda. The first step is to proceed to a careful and objective review of the current state of implementation of the Final Act. To prepare for such a review, all of us will have drawn up our inventories and compiled our statistics. But the review, in the end, is a political matter, not an exercise for statisticians. What matters is what the statistics mean. After all, many of us started from very different positions in respect of the principles and provisions of the Final Act. What seems important to us is to see how close we have come to meeting the objectives on which we agreed in that document.