

A new situation has arisen, which is clearly eroding the prospects for the strengthening of security and co-operation in Europe. The imposition of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, and the regulations made under it have, as the Prime Minister of my country stated on December 30, further defaced the already battered vision of a European order based on respect for the obligations assumed voluntarily by governments under the Final Act of Helsinki. The situation in Poland calls into particular question the commitment of Polish authorities to the principle governing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to that of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. Although, as I said in November 1980, human rights are open to varying interpretations, the Final Act does require agreement on certain concepts and on the inherent dignity of the human person.

As signatories to the Helsinki Final Act we agreed, pursuant to Principle VII, to "respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion". We also agreed to "promote and encourage the effective exercise of civil, political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and freedoms all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person and are essential for his free and full development".

The commitment of the Polish government to fulfil its obligations under Principle VII has clearly been abandoned in the events which have transpired in Poland since December 13, 1981. Thousands of people have been interned, simply for having been active in an organization duly recognized by the Polish courts. They have been charged with no criminal offences. They are simply being held, being allowed minimal contacts with their families and friends, at the pleasure of the government. While it is true that some have been released, those that have been set free have, in most cases, paid a price for their liberty. They have had to sign statements, which in many cases involve renouncing their membership in what is still a legally-recognized institution, even if its activities have been suspended under the terms of the martial law decrees. It is not only those who have been interned who are being forced to sign such statements, however; thousands of ordinary Polish citizens, under the threat of losing their jobs, are being similarly coerced, as the tentacles of the verification process spread their way through the entire