

acts on his own authority in a way which denies a citizen his rights or his dignity as a human being, and which conflicts with the policy of the government as it is stated here....

Some of what I have said this morning is, I am sure, unwelcome to some delegations, but we sincerely hope they will understand that we are trying to explain how we believe the Helsinki process can be advanced. I certainly do hope we have passed the stage where the only response will be yet one more farrago of counter-accusations about alleged discriminations, anti-semitism and generally wholesale denial of human rights in Canada. We readily admit that we have not achieved a perfect society. Nevertheless, our governments do try to respond to the freely expressed complaints of our citizens. They permit -- indeed, encourage -- criticism of government and its agents and look upon this as one of the great strengths of our society and the possibility of a change of government and the right to advocate such change are integral parts of our system. In the end, everyone here knows that he or she is free to visit Canada and talk to anyone. And, if things were as bad in Canada as the Soviet Delegation repeatedly alleges, then we too might have to build barriers of barbed wire and bureaucracy to keep our people in. We do not find this necessary.

This is a serious problem, and I think we can all agree that it deserves serious consideration. Since we do not ignore the force of history and tradition, we are not promoting revolutionary change. Our concern for the rights of minorities is not coloured by irredentist motives. But, in the European environment of decency and openness which is intrinsic to the code of conduct set out in Principle Seven of the Helsinki Final Act, it is no longer good enough to dismiss this problem of human rights and human dignity by saying that the laws and behaviour of other governments are not a legitimate concern of ours. In 1975, at Helsinki, we all agreed that they are the legitimate concern of all of us if they can threaten peace and security in Europe.

Nor can it be said that these differences in the treatment of human beings are an inevitable result of different social and economic systems: There is no iron rule of collectivity, since individuals exist everywhere in our region. (Nor, for that matter, is there an iron rule of individualism, since communal groups also exist everywhere.)