

tional policies", the opportunities for interested members of the public to become involved in the policymaking process have also proliferated, but without doing much to dispel the pervasive cynicism of the watchful public as to whether their views are really wanted in Ottawa or have any effect. Were the nine paragraphs devoted to the importance of public opinion in the seven-page Belgrade speech of 29 paragraphs mere window-dressing for the audiences back home or did they represent what Canadians were demanding from the international market-place of give-and-take diplomacy?

Traditional ingredients

The CSCE case is an interesting one because it encompasses all the traditional ingredients for arousing public interest. Well-organized Eastern European ethnic groups have a compelling personal interest in family-reunification, and in conditions, especially those affecting travel, in their former homelands. Moreover, prominent and outspoken Soviet dissidents have encouraged a variety of humanitarian, civil-liberties and religious groups to make representations to the Canadian Government. The result has been an unusually sustained public interest in the issues. Between the opening of the preparatory meeting of the CSCE in June 1977 and the presentation of the Canadian speech, the Department of External Affairs clipped 36 articles and editorials from 13 Canadian dailies and received 3,340 letters, either directly or through third parties, about human-rights issues in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Though some clearly were inspired by the local activities of Amnesty International and of church and ethnic groups, the representations arrived from all parts of Canada and, in general, insisted that the Government take a firm stand on human rights and humanitarian questions at Belgrade. It was clear from these letters and articles, and from meetings with a few academics and interest groups, that Canada would be wise to warn the delegates at Belgrade that "the factor of credibility could be crucial to public support for *détente* in Canada". In this case, however, as so often in multilateral negotiations in which Canada has little leverage, the credibility factor is ultimately beyond its grasp. But failure to achieve was not failure to present, and the next challenge for the interest groups is the development of a new set of policy recommendations and means of implementation that will meet the realities of organizational, international and other domestic constraints experienced in this round of diplomatic encounters. For, within

most amalgams of policy considerations and constraints, the public sectors can play, and sometimes have played, a useful role that deserves to be known and appreciated if a mutually-constructive dialogue is to evolve between the policy-makers and the alert public.

In direct representation, the written dialogue is the means most often used by individual members of the attentive or concerned public. In the early Seventies, the Secretary of State for External Affairs received annually just over 6,000 written representations on all matters affecting Canada's external relations. The year 1973 saw Canadians swept by a letters-to-the-editor craze that had its impact on External Affairs as well, since 10,467 written representations were received that year and a slightly higher total the year after, before descending to the present plateau of approximately 7,000 a year (actually 7,456 in 1976 and 7,056 in 1977). These totals cover only those representations that reached the Department through the Minister's Office. No effort is made to tabulate collectively the representations sent directly to civil servants. An analysis of the Minister's departmental correspondence for 1977 shows that 40 per cent were simple requests for information, most of which went directly to the Information Services Division or the operational divisions and 7 per cent dealt with consular assistance, of which the Department now handles more than half a million cases a year. The policy-oriented subjects that attracted the most attention on a monthly basis were economic support for Chile (87 - May), protest against Soviet Matzah import restrictions (84 - March) and support for a Canadian call for enquiry into Uganda (73 - March, and 111 - April).

Written representations usually take the form of personal letters, multiple-signature letters, petitions, and various forms of organized write-ins (coupons are not included in the above totals). Of these the most effective would be a personal letter that succinctly, in not more than two typewritten pages, addresses itself to three issues: (a) what the problem is; (b) what should be done about it; and (c) why something should be done now or why it demands an immediate place in departmental priorities. Obviously the Minister cannot personally respond to every letter, but he does have the opportunity to see statistics on the correspondence and to read individual letters and responses. From a policymaking point of view, the most important fact is that the reply to every serious letter must be drafted by the very desk officer responsible for the daily monitoring of that policy area. This means that the officer responsible for

*Insistence
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