



Statements and Speeches

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WHAT DID THE BELGRADE MEETING ACHIEVE?

The Closing Canadian Statement, by the Honourable Norman Cafik, Minister of State for Multiculturalism and Special Representative of the Secretary of State for External Affairs, to the Meeting of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Belgrade, March 9, 1978.

When our meeting began its work here last October, our agenda contained two main items, which were logically linked to each other. The first was to hold a careful and objective review of the current state of implementation of the Final Act. The second was to consider new proposals, designed not to rewrite the Final Act but to deepen our collective commitment to its purposes and to improve the quality of our performance. We successfully pursued the first objective by holding a wide-ranging, frank and honest review of implementation. Even if a real dialogue was never achieved between us, the course of our deliberations showed clearly how much still remained to be done. It is all the more unfortunate that we seemingly failed to realize the negative impact resulting from the shortcomings of incomplete implementation and the effect such gaps may have on future expectations and achievement. This is evident from the minimal document with which we conclude our meeting. It is a source of disappointment to my Government that this document does not reflect the vital substantive concerns of participating states, in that we could not agree to express the need for more positive and constructive efforts so as to make the Final Act a more vital and dynamic part of the relationships between us.

It is regrettable that we could not even agree on a factual account for the public record. Public opinion in our countries has a right to expect some commonly agreed assessment of how the Final Act has been implemented and how we propose to meet the commitments we have made in the period that lies ahead. Unfortunately, it will not get this. Instead, the meeting has produced only a document reflecting lowest common denominators. We should have hoped that the two and a half years during which we have worked together to give substance to the provisions of the Final Act would have taken us beyond that. As it is, each of us will have to provide his own explanation of what took place here, with results that will undoubtedly vary with the particular perspective in which we each see the outcome of the Belgrade meeting.

Canada has never had illusions about the obstacles that lie in the way of full implementation of the Final Act. Our review confirmed only too clearly that after only two and a half years we are indeed a long way from improving security and promoting co-operation in Europe within the full measure of our capacities. But we also discovered that there is a deep-seated concern on the part of all participating states to seek progress on those parts of the Final Act of special interest to them. Our concern for positive achievement has certainly not diminished since Helsinki and, judging by the number of proposals tabled, this increased concern is shared by many, undoubtedly because expectations have been raised by the Final Act. This represents a positive
