

Helsinki Human Rights Day

considerations to our colleagues from eastern Europe. That is where the dialogue can take place, and it does take place at times.

The Hon. Member was quite right when he said that declaring August 1, 1987, as Helsinki Human Rights Day may appear to be a small step, but nevertheless it is a small step on a long road that began in 1975 when the Government of Canada participated, not only sympathetically but enthusiastically, in the notion of finding common ground and a convergence of interests, awkward and unfocused as it might be at times, in order to bring cohesion and build bridges between such different systems as are represented by the 35 nations that compose this particular conference.

I congratulate the Hon. Member for Parkdale—High Park. He has done us a service by reminding us that there is a CSC process, that we have a particular interest and obligation on the side of human rights, that we want to intensify our efforts, that we want to participate in these efforts in their totality, and that Canada as a middle nation has a particular role to play. I must say that that conference is one of the world's forums in which middle nations can play a major leadership role notwithstanding the two superpowers which, in this kind of exchange, often tend either to drag their feet or sometimes to be so aggressive and unconstructive that the whole process comes to a grinding halt. That is neither the object nor the substance of this motion. Perhaps it should be the object of a debate on another day.

Mr. John Reimer (Kitchener): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to address the House on this motion and to underline the Government's support for the idea of a Helsinki Human Rights Day to be celebrated every year on the first day of August.

I commend the Hon. Member for Parkdale—High Park (Mr. Witer) for bringing this motion before the House. I listened very carefully as well to the comments made by the Hon. Member for Davenport (Mr. Caccia), and I think he made a very good point by saying that although the motion focuses on human rights, we should really remember that the Helsinki Final Act has many different element parts and we want to be supportive of the entire accords.

There is no question, nevertheless, that the promotion and protection of human rights in all of the 35 participating states of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is a very important and fundamental part of the Helsinki Final Act. Canadians have a deep interest in and respect for human rights throughout the world and have campaigned vigorously against abuses of these rights wherever they occur.

In its response to the Special joint committee report on Canada's international relations, the Government reiterated that its concern for the fundamental rights of individuals and groups is intrinsic to Canadian society and Canada's historical heritage. The Government further stated that human rights

are and will remain a fundamental, integral part of Canadian foreign policy.

Twelve years ago, the signing of the Helsinki Final Act evoked a wide range of reactions. Some naively believed that the hostility and uncertainty which had marked East-West relations for so long would quickly disappear in an era of *détente*. Others, somewhat cynically, viewed the Final Act as a commendable set of principles which would be ignored and soon forgotten. However, most of us viewed the Final Act with both cautious hope and pragmatic realism.

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Hope was essential. Canada has deep roots in Europe. Our historical origins lie in Europe. We have shared the benefits of Europe's political and social ideals, along with the tragic cost of Europe's wars. Experience has shown that even long-standing divisions can be healed, or at least managed peacefully. The relationship between West Germany and Canada since 1945 is a good example of that. In spite of two world wars we are good friends and committed allies in NATO, for peace and security and the progress of democracy and human rights in the world. Our hope, however, was then and is still today tempered by realism. The tortuous negotiations which led to the Final Act made it painfully clear that distrust and hostility were very deeply-rooted, and productive dialogue would take time, patience and, above all, commitment.

More than that, however, the history of Communism since 1917 has taught us that we must study very carefully and diligently both its theory and practice. We have to be very careful and constantly on guard. Words might mean one thing in our democratic system but may be used in an entirely different way by the Communists for their own ends. For example, in the Yalta Agreement it was declared that within two years there would be free and unfettered democratic elections in all of the liberated states of eastern Europe. Did that happen? Certainly not from the point of view of how we understand free, unfettered and democratic. Nevertheless, the three nations who signed the Yalta Agreement all agreed on those words. We have to look at the theory and practice of Communism to determine how the Soviet Union meant those words when it signed the agreement.

In order to have a free and unfettered democratic election under Communism you must first remove by torture, death, expropriation and imprisonment all of the wealthy, the educated, land owners, and all foreigners whatever their name. A cousin of mine, because of his German name, Reimer, was taken as a 15-year old boy and sent to a gulag. He came back to the Soviet Union and, fortunately, six years ago came to Canada. Then you remove all the churches' power and influence. Then you get rid of all the political Parties. When you have one Party left and all other influences have been eliminated, and the one Party is supreme in all the institutions of the state, you can have a free, unfettered and democratic election. That is what they meant because that is what they did in all the eastern European states. The Red Army came